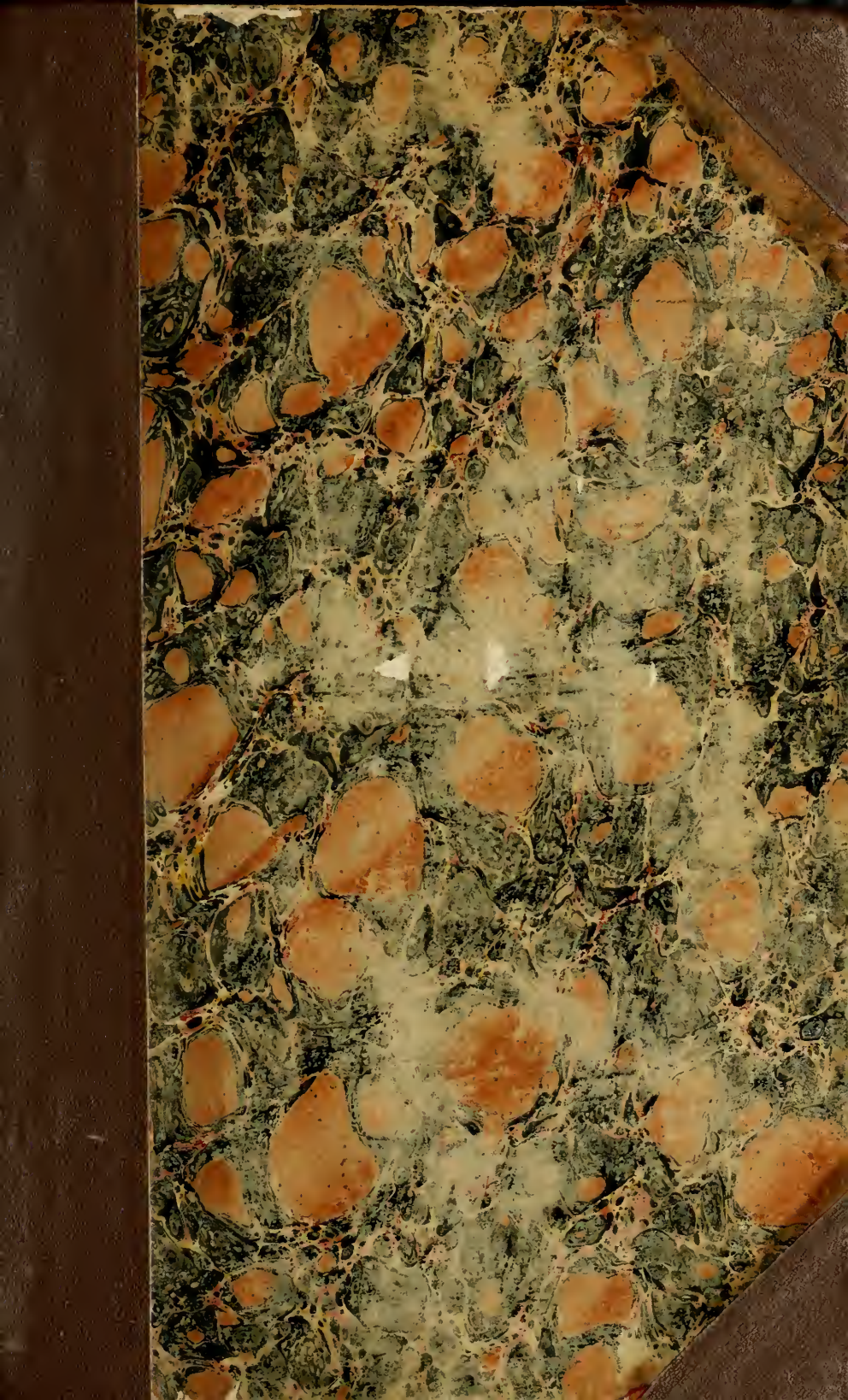
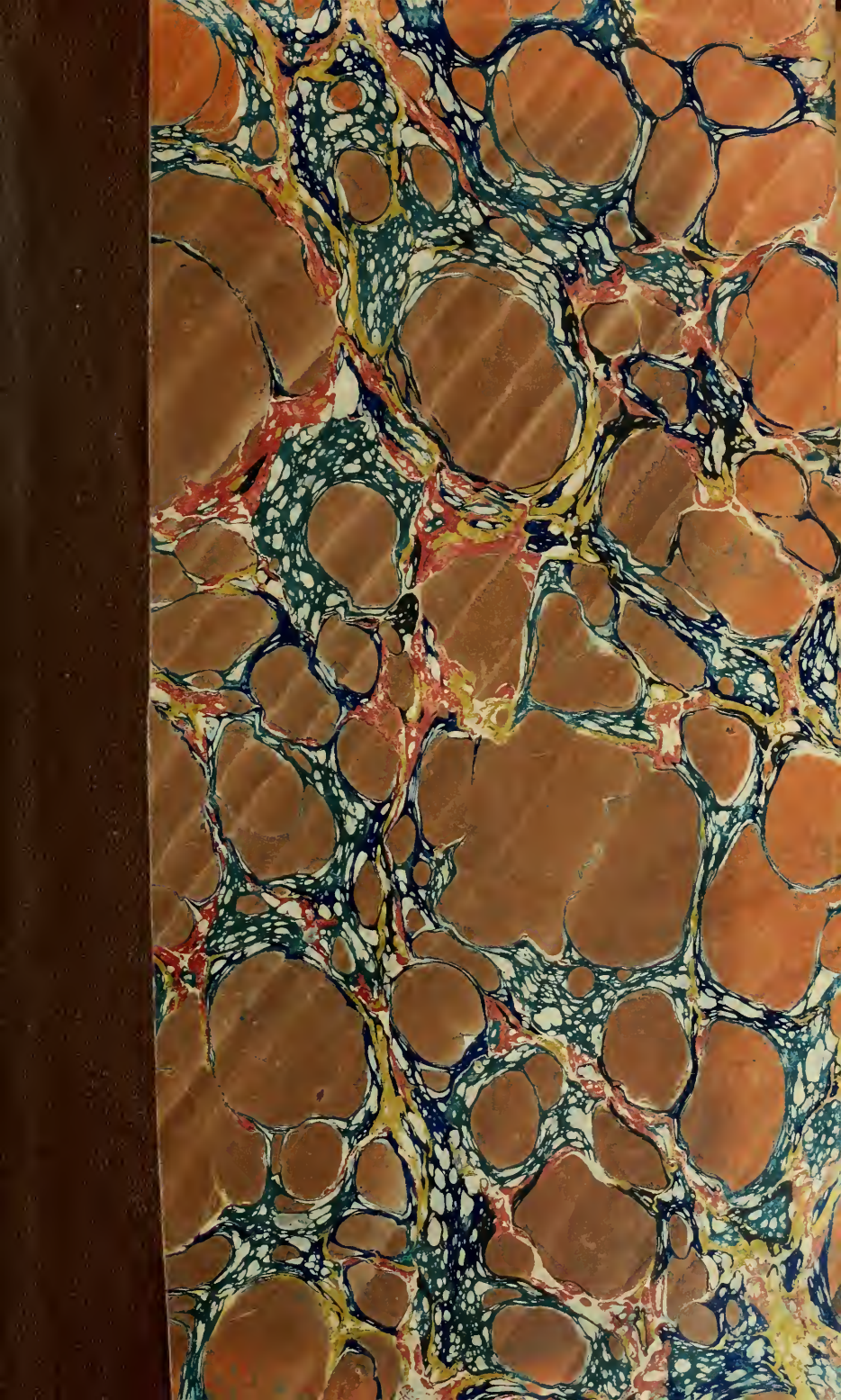




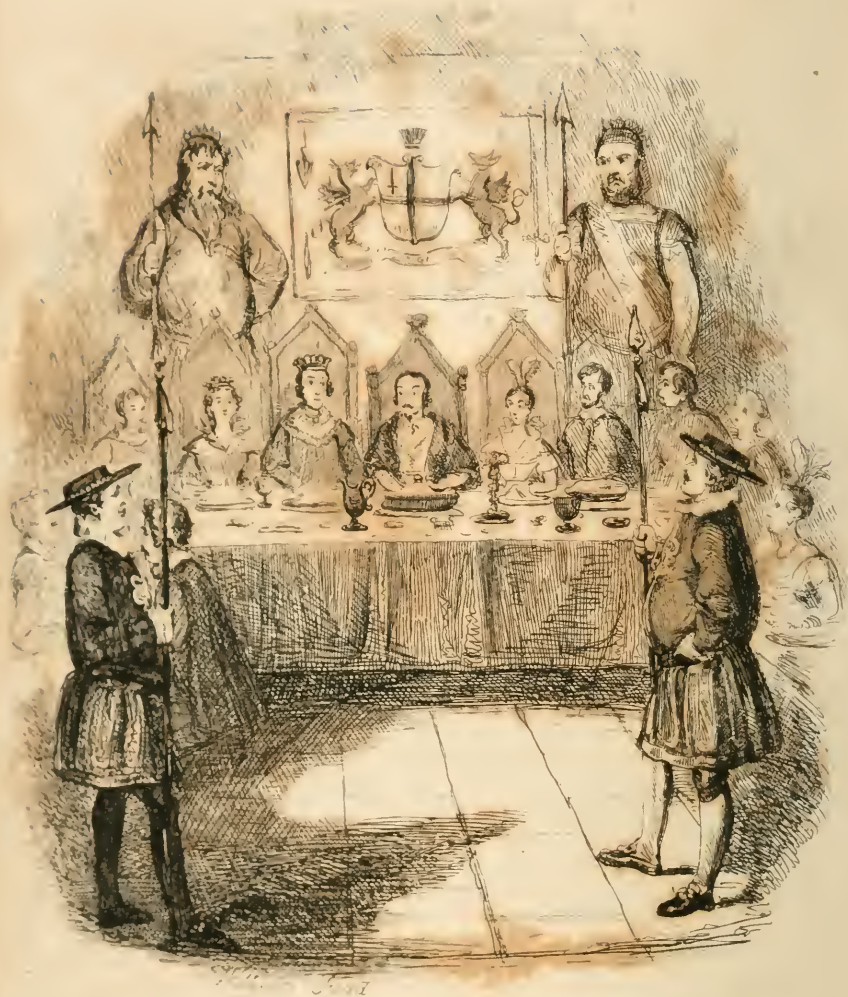




Harry L. Truitt
1923.







The Lord Mayor's Feast in 1746.

THE

LIFE AND TIMES

OF

DICK WHITTINGTON:

AN

Historical Romance.

“Some are born great, some achieve greatness,
And some have greatness thrust upon them.”

SHAKSPEARE.

LONDON:

HUGH CUNNINGHAM, ST. MARTIN'S PLACE,
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P R E F A C E.

IN presenting this romance to the public in a complete state, and taking leave of those of his readers who, during its periodical progress, have from month to month met its consecutive advances with a generous welcome, and (by pausing at the several stages of their existence to conjecture their ultimate disposition) become interested in the characters whom he has introduced to their notice, the Author begs leave to offer a few remarks, which, though not essential to its due comprehension, will illustrate the principle that dictated the conception, and the object that was sought by the conduct, of the story.

The commercial pursuits that have raised London to the chief place among the cities of the world, and the peculiar qualities that render it the most eligible seat for the government of a mighty empire, are not of a nature to invest it with that venerable repute to which its history and antiquity entitle it; and for this reason, instead of admiring the munificence of its merchant-princes, or associating them with the great events of the past, we have been wont to regard them as insensate pursuers of wealth, or, with still less of justice, established gluttons. Yet no city, perhaps, can put forth such stirring annals as those of London; nor can any, however respectable in point of rank and age, boast of worthier or more patriotic sons. To prove this, and at the same time to shed over the dingy temple of traffic the golden beams of romance, this work was undertaken; and, in order that both might be pre-

sented at once to the reader's vision, it blends in one tale the national and metropolitan chronicles.

The intestine commotions with which we were threatened previous to the appearance of this work, and which have happily been suppressed by the energy of the government, suggested to the Author that, as the creed of modern revolutionists involves the principles of which Parson Ball was the apostle, he might instance the outbreak of Wat Tyler as an illustration of the excesses which would probably follow an insurrection of Chartists; and in the prospectus of the work, incorporated with the first Number, he hinted at this purpose in terms too broad to be mistaken. He now deems it necessary to remind the reader of this circumstance, as it establishes him beyond question in the proprietorship of the idea.

The obloquy which several novelists had previously cast on the Jews, than whom more industrious or inoffensive citizens do not exist, induced the Author to represent a member of that persuasion in a new character; and by tracing his course through a dark and stormy era, and comparing his actions and acquirements with those of his Christian persecutors, to shew the cruel injustice of holding up a particular class to public detestation.

For the anachronisms which he has committed, and his adoption of the story of the cat, the Author will plead a novelist's licence. Tennent, however, gives credit to the traditionary account of the cat's fortunes, and instances a similar incident in the history of a native of Portugal—which incident is equally marvellous, but not so generally known.

December 1st, 1840.

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THE
LIFE AND TIMES
OF
DICK WHITTINGTON.

THE FIRST PERIOD. INFANCY—1364.

CHAPTER I. THE TERMAGANT.

THE MARKET-PLACE AT TAUNTON—THE MADONNA'S SHRINE—WILLIAMS INTRODUCED—HIS DEVOTIONS INTERRUPTED BY COBBS—THE CAROUSAL—THE PARTING—WILLIAMS'S JOURNEY HOME—THE SNOW-STORM—THE SHED—THE MOTHER AND HER CHILD—DICK WHITTINGTON—DEATH OF THE MOTHER—WILLIAMS TAKES THE CHILD HOME—DAME WILLIAMS, THE TERMAGANT—THE MANNER IN WHICH SHE RECEIVED HER HUSBAND.

ON the afternoon of the 30th of January, 1364, long after the expiration of the usual hour of business, the market-place of the little town of Taunton, in Somersetshire, presented an appearance of bustle which was quite out of character with its size; and if a stranger, unacquainted with the cause, had surveyed it at the time, he would probably have formed a higher estimate of its importance than its official capabilities would have warranted. There were many respectable persons, principally yeomen and strangers, collected in groups in different parts of the market, but their discourse, which was apparently carried on with considerable spirit, did not touch on the dry details of commerce, as an occasional burst of laughter fully demonstrated. Even some substantial-looking burghers, who at other times would have been seen only in their stalls, were affably conversing with less respectable vendors; who, as their commodities were exposed for sale in open baskets, which usually comprised their entire property, were for the most part regarded as intruders by the occupants of stalls. The circumstance which had produced such a good feeling between parties who were generally so inimical to each other, and which in fact formed a topic of discourse for the whole town, was a recent tournament, held by Sir Herbert de

Pye, feudal Baron of Taunton, in a plain adjoining the town; and those who had witnessed this exhibition, which had attracted spectators from all parts of the country, were descanting on the merits of the several competitors for the prize. But the intense cold, and the early twilight of a winter's afternoon, combined, at last, to drive the majority of them home; and others, who had visited the town for commercial purposes only, adjourned to two rival hostelries in the immediate vicinity.

Among those few who continued to linger in the market, even after the most sedulous burgher had retired, was a short jolly-looking man, wrapped in a ponderous cloak, which, as it was made of stout Flemish cloth, was a sufficient guarantee for the respectability of its proprietor. His habiliments, nevertheless, were not superior to those worn by the generality of the commercial classes; nor did his personal aspect, so far as the twilight allowed it to be seen, at all savour of gentility. His face, though it was marked with the wrinkles of a fortieth year, was certainly pleasing; but there was an expression in his merry eye—an appearance which could not be painted with accuracy, and which might be overlooked by a cursory observer—that indicated a tame and passive disposition. He was standing with his face to a small lamp, which cast its feeble rays on an effigy of the Madonna, but he was not, apparently, paying his adoration to the beatifical virgin, though, when the sound of a heavy step announced the approach of a passenger, he threw himself on his knees before the shrine, and fervently ejaculated “Ave Maria!”

The individual whose vicinity had made him a witness of this display of religious ardour, which he did not seem to have expected from the man in the cloak, burst into a loud laugh, as he halted in his rear; and further interrupted his devotions, as well as disturbed his equanimity, with a smart stroke of his cane. The devotee turned to survey the person of this irreverent intruder; and, though his countenance advanced more legitimate claims, his dress was certainly no warrant for his familiar mode of salutation.

A suit of dark-coloured clothes, worn nearly thread-bare, and cut in the close and short fashion which prevailed during the preceding reign, revealed the proportions of his tall and muscular figure; and a drugget surcoat, together with a long, pointed hat, completed his equipment. His countenance had once been handsome, but, now that he affected mirth, it looked grim, for there was a counter-expression stamped on his features—whether produced by the anxiety attending on commercial pursuits, or by some deeper and more morbid feeling, which belied his cachinnation.

“How now, Master Williams?” he said to the devotee, “How is it with you these times, and how fares the little fellow whom we call our son?”

“Ah! my merry merchant!” answered Williams, for such was the designation of him of the cloak, “is it your proper self? Why, as times go, I can’t complain; and the boy, our son as you call him, grows handsomer every day. But to come to business, Master Cobbs, how go your Spanish wines?”

"You shall taste them yourself, my master," replied the other, "I have left a sample at the Boar's Head; and if you like the flavour, my wains will be up to-morrow, and you shall have a cask or two."

"We will first taste your sample, Master Cobbs," said Williams, "and mayhap it will keep out the cold this dreary night; for by my holidame! I have waited for you till my teeth chatter; and the sky threatens a rough night."

"Your horse is at the Boar's Head, I ween?" cried Cobbs, as he seized the other's arm, and dragged him hastily onwards.

"Aye, gaffer," returned Williams; "but prythee slack your pace a peg. We have no wager depending on our legs."

But the merchant, disregarding the remonstrance of Williams, pushed on at the same pace. In a few moments they emerged from the market, and, when they had proceeded a few yards down the street, arrived at a respectable-looking tavern, which they immediately entered.

"The Boar's Head," which name distinguished this place of entertainment from a contiguous rival, was still crowded with joyous visitors, who, seated round the extensive hearth, were listening to the performance of a mendicant musician. Neither Williams nor Cobbs seemed desirous to participate the festivity of the common room, for they turned into a private apartment in the rear of the premises, where preparations had apparently been made for their reception. They soon entered on the discussion of a flagon of rich wine, which stood, with a small lamp, on the table at which they were seated, and as Master Williams derived considerable entertainment from the discourse of his companion, and felt a sort of interest in the emptying of the wine flagon, the night had quite set in before he remembered that he was ten miles distant from his home. When this circumstance suddenly occurred to his memory, although his entertainer pressed him to remain for the night, he rose to depart; for, as will hereafter be manifest, Master Williams dared not absent himself a night from home.

"St. George!" he cried, as the proprietor of the hostelry entered the room, "how the wind howls! and I have ten good miles to ride. Prythee mine host, let my horse be saddled instant: and, Master Cobbs, get you your wains up as soon as you can, for a cask of this wine is worth a Christian's ransom."

"I wish you a pleasant journey, my master," replied Cobbs, "and sorry am I that the wains are not up now. It is a pity to have such goods out on a night like this; for by my troth! the wind is as noisy as yonder croaking minstrel."

"Ah, thou hast no taste for the gay science, Sir Merchant," rejoined the other, as, wrapping himself in the folds of his comfortable cloak, he smiled at the sarcastic simile of his companion: "but good night; a farewell to you!"

"My benison be on thee, gossip!" cried Cobbs, as he followed him to the door of the hostelry, "and a good night be it, for thy sake!"

"St. Julian grant it!" exclaimed Williams; and mounting his

horse, which stood ready at the door, he galloped off in the direction of his home.

The road which Master Williams traversed with so much celerity led to the village of Taunton-Deans, which, though it was situate at an angle of the main road, was then, as it is still, both retired and little known. The night could scarcely be called dark, for the heavens wore that white, heavy sky, which is peculiar to a northern latitude, but the very whiteness of its complexion, far from being luminous, invested every object with opacity. The snow, too, began to descend with a rapidity which foreboded a violent storm; and as the horseman was riding in the face of a keen biting wind, which maintained a strenuous opposition to his progress, he had some difficulty in persuading his steed to continue its exertions. By dint of whip and spur, however, he was enabled to pursue the first eight miles of his journey, without a halt; but when he had proceeded thus far, the snow storm became so violent, that he determined to seek a few moments' shelter in a shed which he was then approaching.

He pulled up before the shed with the intention of dismounting, in order that his horse might have the full benefit of his temporary halt, when he was startled by a feeble groan, which was quickly succeeded by a second, and which seemed to issue from the interior. His first impulse was to fly; but though he firmly believed in the prevailing creed of apparitions and ghostly visitations, Williams was gifted with sufficient common sense to master his fears when nothing supernaturally appeared; and as he knew of no legend that attached an evil reputation to the shed, and thought that it was likely to be the last retreat of some distressed mortal rather than the haunt of goblins, he resolved to prosecute his original purpose.

On entering the shed, which was at best but a pitiful asylum from the raging elements, he discovered a respectably clad female stretched in the most sheltered corner, and a babe, whose tiny limbs were folded in the warm garments of his nurse, sleeping on her naked bosom. The woman was in that torpid condition which is sometimes the precursor of an easy death, and the infant was wrapped in the slumber which often proves equally destructive. The woman's clothes notwithstanding, did not accord with her situation; for the comfortable russet petticoat and warm jerkin of cloth, though the material was coarse, belonged to the better sort of peasants; and her face, pallid as it was, seemed too soft, and too lovely, for that of a mendicant. Her appearance, indeed, was not so distressing as her fearful apathy, which, with her heavy sonorous breathings, savoured of speedy dissolution.

Williams comprehended the dangerous condition of the sufferers at a glance, and instantly divesting himself of his cloak, he laid it over their unconscious forms. He then drew from his pocket a small vial of spirits, which he had furnished himself with previous to his egression from "the Boar's Head," and having applied some of its contents as an epithem to the woman's forehead, and injected a small portion into her mouth, he succeeded in



*Duke Whittington his dying Mother discovered
in the Forest by the Host of the
Sancte George & the Dragonne.*

restoring her to a partial sensibility. On opening her eyes, she stared round with a wild look, which manifested the intensity of her abstraction, and uttering a deep groan, twined her arms round her slumbering infant. She strove to raise her head, which was resting on a block of decayed stone, but she was incompetent for the effort; and, seemingly convinced of this, she contented herself with turning her face round to meet that of her visiter.

"You've not seen my Dickon, have you?" she said, fixing her eyes on the kindly-looking face of Williams: "have you?" she repeated, trying to raise up her head. "Tell him I was not untrue to him! Tell him my master is no merchant!—but no," she continued, "you must not divulge that. But tell him I died with his name on my lips. Dick—Dick Whittington! our Lady and Saint—"

"Come, my good dame," said Williams, raising her head, "cheer thee up! There, lean your head on my arm."

"Richard! Richard!" groaned the woman.

Her words became unintelligible, and though she continued to speak, and Williams tried to catch every word that she uttered, he was unable to draw any inference from her incoherent ejaculations. He did, indeed, elicit, that she was on her way to the castle of Taunton, whither, she said, her husband had followed his lord to the tournament; but, though he thrice entreated her to inform him, he could not learn the designation of the lord. At length she receded into the state of torpor in which he had originally discovered her; and while he was endeavouring, by the repetition of his former mode of treatment, to revive her consciousness, she drew a short, heavy respiration, and expired.

Master Williams, if he had not been labouring under the excitement produced by his previous indulgence in wine, would have been much embarrassed by the novelty of the situation in which he was now placed; but, as the matter stood, he did not deliberate on the course which it would be advisable to adopt, for, in his opinion, only one course presented itself. It was clear, he thought, that the woman had perished from exposure to the cold; and that the infant, if he remained there, would inevitably encounter the same fate. He determined, therefore, to take care of him for the night; and, if he lived so long, to surrender him in the morning to the parish authorities. In pursuance of this resolution, which, as he was subject to the dominion of an arbitrary consort, was as charitable a one as he could venture on alone, he first arranged the limbs of the corpse with due decorum, and then raised the infant from his ghastly resting-place. Without staying to appease his cries, he placed him with great tenderness under his cloak; and, mounting his horse, renewed his journey.

The snow storm had increased rather than abated, and the wind almost peeled the skin from the face, but Williams was too much excited by the adventure of the evening, and too much concerned for the security of his freight, to be any longer obstructed by the elements. He spurred his horse into a spirited gallop; and

on turning an angle of the road, about two miles distance from the shed, he reined up before his own dwelling.

This tenement was one of those substantial brick erections, which, though devoid of all pretence or ostentation, were, in those days, held sufficient proofs of the comfortable circumstances of their occupants. The wide and divided door, the illuminated passage, and an external notification which the night obscured, were appurtenances in an hostelry of the fourteenth century which vouched for its character; and all these were conspicuous in the habitation which the equestrian had now attained, and which, though a stranger would not have divined as much from his demeanour, he owned. The fact was, that Williams would have endured the storm without, unusually violent as it was, with more patience than the tempest which he expected to encounter within; for, as has been before hinted, his dame was never much disposed to a pacific life, and his introduction of a stranger, in the person of a foundling, was likely to provoke her serious displeasure. A cry from the child, however, revived his drooping spirits; and, having first disposed of his horse in a contiguous stable, he crossed the threshold of the "Sancte George and the Dragonne."

"Oh! farder! farder!" exclaimed a boy, apparently about four years of age, who ran forwards to the innkeeper, as he entered the hall of the hostelry, "have you brought home a baby?"

"Hush, my darling!" said Williams, stooping to caress the child; in which act, however, to his great terror, he was abruptly interrupted.

"A fine time to come home, isn't it?" cried a short, dumpy, hard-featured woman, whose sudden irruption into the room induced Williams to conceal the foundling under his cloak, and who, with a hand on each hip, and head erect, marched into the centre of the hall; "and a nice thing to be toying with a child nobody owns, and letting the snow drip off you on to the floor, instead of seeking the presence of your neglected wife?—Hoity toity! what's that squalling?—a baby?"

"My dear," replied her timid consort, "I was just coming to seek you, and—"

"The baby, caitiff?" screamed the hostess. "Whose is it?"

"I found him on the road, my dear," answered Williams.

The person addressed was not only an ill-favoured, but an ill-natured woman. Finding that her husband was of a disposition which shrank from altercation, she had early assumed the reins of domestic government, and, without binding herself by the dictates of prudence, exercised that dominion which is more the prerogative of the husband, and which never fails to lessen the reputation of a wife. But, notwithstanding, she possessed a certain sort of affection for him; if that, indeed, may be called affection, which, never moved to tenderness, is displayed only in paroxysms of jealousy, and which, dwelling in a corrupt heart, is stirred only by vicious emotions. On the present occasion, when the better feelings of woman ought to have predominated, she regarded the foundling as the offspring of an





The Termagant's jealousy aroused.

illicit amour of her husband; for the story of his finding him on the road homewards, although he supported it with the most solemn asseveration, seemed, in her judgment, too improbable to merit consideration.

“Villain!” she exclaimed, darting towards him, “give up your bastard! I’ll tear it in pieces before your face.”

“Nay, good dame,” supplicated Williams, “the baby can’t help it, you know.”

“Give it up directly,” vociferated his wife; and, snatching the infant from the arms of Williams, she ran with him to the front of the hostelry fire, which, filling a grate of expansive dimensions, emitted sufficient light and warmth to illuminate and heat the apartment.

“As like as two moidores,” she cried, as, with the aid of the light which emanated from the huge fire, she scrutinized the infant’s features, which, as may be supposed, bore no resemblance to those of the party accused; “as like as two moidores,” she repeated, starting towards her husband, “and mayhap, villain, you’ll still say you found it?”

Williams was about to answer in the affirmative, which would have increased the resentment of the dame, and, in the end, might have occasioned a resort to more militant proceedings, when the loud blast of a bugle, succeeded by the tramp of several horses, announced the arrival of guests of rank.

CHAPTER II. THE DISCOVERY.

THE ARRIVAL OF SIR ALFRED SINCLAIR—THE ADVENTURE OF THE CHILD, HENRY—HIS RECOGNITION BY SIR ALFRED—OF THE MINSTREL'S DISCOMPOSURE—DAME WILLIAMS REVEALS HENRY'S HISTORY—THE SUPPER—THE MINSTREL'S LAY—SIR ALFRED AND THE MINSTREL CONFER TOGETHER—SIR ALFRED REVEALS HIS CRIMINAL LOVE, AND RELATES HOW HE HAD BEEN DECEIVED BY HUBERT CROMWELL—SIR ALFRED'S PASSION—OF THE VOW WHICH THE MINSTREL MADE, AND THE CRIMINAL PROJECT WHICH HE UNDERTOOK—THE MINSTREL'S RETREAT.

THE company which, to the ineffable relief of Master Williams, had interrupted the torrent of the dame's displeasure, consisted of five persons, whom the continuance of the snow-storm had compelled to seek shelter for the night.

The principal of the party was of a tall and courtly person, and of handsome though irregular features. There was, however, a cloud in his countenance, a mixture of the gloomy and the morose, which was both suspicious and unpleasing. The lustre of his quick, grey eye was corrected by a grave expression of melancholy beneath; and his forehead, though his age could not have exceeded thirty years, was already furrowed with several deep wrinkles. His beard and moustachios, which were of a colour approaching to sandy, united, and the former appendage, in accordance with the prevailing mode, was long and round. His sandy-coloured hair was allowed to fall over his high forehead, perhaps with a view of concealing the wrinkles beneath; and his eyebrows, thick and bushy, imparted to his eyes a wild ferocity, which was calculated to make him more an object of respect than of love.

On divesting himself of his heavy riding-cloak, which he handed to one of his company on entering the inn, his other habiliments bespoke him of the patrician order; and though his train was unusually small, it was apparent, from the character of those who accompanied him, that he was at least of the baronial dignity.

The most remarkable person in his suite, for such the remainder of the party evidently were, was a minstrel, habited in the flowing costume which the professors of the gay science then assumed, whose enormous black beard, entirely obscuring the lower part of his face, invested him with a very hirsute and unpoetic air. It would have been difficult to discover, except by his speech, what country had given him birth; for, though his face wore the complexion of the sunny South, his blue eyes had the brilliancy of the less passionate North. His left hand grasped a harp, over whose wires, as he followed his lord into the hall of the hostelry, he drew the fingers of his other

hand; but, finding that this performance did not call forth any applause from the company, he seated himself sulkily on a settle near the fire, and laid his instrument on an adjacent bench.

An esquire and two men-at-arms, who at first employed themselves in taking care of the horses, comprised the remainder of the stranger's retinue: and for the entertainment of these guests, who were of an order which seldom paid her the honour of a visit, Dame Williams began to labour with an assiduity which was truly laudable.

So anxious was the worthy hostess that her exalted visiter should have cause to commend the cheer which she provided, and so intent was her mind on the preparation of several culinary delicacies for his individual consumption, that, in the confusion of her ideas, she restored the exhausted foundling to the custody of her husband, contenting herself, at the moment, with dropping him a significant scowl, which insinuated that the next ebullition of her wrath would be more destructive in its effects. The indefatigable Williams immediately set about making provision for the infant, who was now arrived at the last stage of inanition; and in this pursuit he was too earnestly occupied to observe that the other child, who was noticed in the preceding chapter as constituting one of his family, had intruded himself into the society of the strangers.

This boy was of that peculiar composition which is destined to attract notice from infancy to the decline of life. His dress was of the most humble description, consisting only of a coarse drugget frock and trousers, cut short at the neck, and made to button up the front; but the mediocrity of his attire could not detract from the beauty of his round, ruddy countenance, or conceal the symmetry of his infant limbs. His profuse brown hair, falling in ringlets down his neck, and his jet black eyes, now pensive and now smiling, could not be looked on without an undefinable pleasure: and it was this, perhaps, which promoted his advances towards familiarity with three of the nobleman's attendants; though a fourth, the minstrel, met them with a decided repulse. The peremptory tone in which the latter, on the child's accidentally pushing against his harp, bade him be gone to bed, and the consequent intercession of the esquire, with whom he had become a favourite, first drew the attention of the dame to his ubiquity; and she was about to subject him to corporal correction, notwithstanding that the esquire spoke in his behalf, when a more exalted personage deigned to interfere.

"What do you see in this urchin, Roger Wallingford, to induce you to intercede so lustily in his behalf?" asked the chief of the esquire, curling his lip, as he spoke, into a smile of contempt. "Prythee," he continued, "suffer the good woman to remove her bantling."

"'Twere a shame to have the child punished, Sir Alfred," replied the esquire; "but doubtless you have the right to order it, and therefore I will not oppose it."

"You speak in riddles, good Roger," cried Sir Alfred; "and Walter Howson looks as if he could cudgel you for doing so."

"I mean, then, my lord," returned the esquire, disregarding the inimical looks of the minstrel, "that the child is so like you that——"

"You think the dame has been playing false to her husband," said Sir Alfred, smiling.

"Then he thinks a falsity, my lord," cried Dame Williams, who had been combating her voluble propensities with great difficulty, and was now so indignant at the insinuation of the esquire, and so anxious to vindicate her impugned character, that she overcame the awe which the presence of nobility had at first excited; "Then he thinks a falsity, my lord," she vociferated, "begging your lordship's grace for using the word. I'm as honest a woman as any in the hamlet; and, by my holidame! the boy may be as nobly born as your lordship, for he's come, I'm told, of the best blood in the land."

"Ah!" exclaimed Sir Alfred, with visible agitation, "say'st thou?" And, suddenly resuming his former manner, and affecting a gaiety which was exotic to his feelings, he added, "Truly, dame, you have cause to be offended with my simple esquire, who has been at least malapert; but, prythee, bear no animosity to him on that score; and for the bantling, let me see if he resemble me indeed."

It was, perhaps, fortunate for the minstrel's reputation, or, at least, for the purpose which he had in hand, that the latter part of this colloquy had so entirely engrossed the attention of the company, whose eyes would otherwise have overlooked him, that the remarkable uncasiness of his demeanour had escaped their observation; and he was still more fortunate in being able to repress the mental commotion which he had sustained, and which would perhaps have betrayed his design, before the eye of Sir Alfred could detect it. The latter received the boy from Dame Williams with seeming indifference; but, as he scanned his features, he could not resist an exclamation of surprise at the striking completeness of the likeness. There was the same proud lip, the same Grecian nose, the same high brow and round face, only that the one was ruddy with the buoyancy of childhood, and the other was marked with the cares of maturity. The child's eyes, too, were of a jet black, while Sir Alfred's were of a grey colour; and, though the disposition of features was the same, their expression was different.

"He is a *little* like me," said Sir Alfred, with a particular emphasis on the auxiliary verb and the qualification; "and truly, if he be of gentle blood, I should be glad to rear him as my page. What say you, Howson?" he continued, turning to the minstrel, and holding the child so that no other member of the company could observe his motions, "Will he make a fit page for an aspiring knight?"

"He is pert enough, my lord; and that is a good quality in a page," replied the minstrel, who perceived that Sir Alfred was peeping beneath the spencer of the boy, and was greatly agitated at some mark which he discovered on his breast. "Pages are pert to a proverb."

"Ha! ha! you churl!" cried Sir Alfred, attempting to laugh, "I never knew you speak tenderly of your beardless mates. You should

have sought the cloister and the cowl, good Walter, instead of the minstrel's muse and lyre. Your verse, though smooth to the ear, has over-much of melancholy in its rhythm; and, by my faith! when you attempt a merry lay, it grows discordant."

The company affected to be greatly amused at this sarcasm of Sir Alfred, who, drinking off a flagon of wine which his esquire presented to him, endeavoured to stifle the perturbation from which he was inwardly suffering. With this view he was about to enter into that sort of discourse with which the great lords of the time often indulged their vassals, and which, while it conferred honour on the inferior, was not considered any derogation of the party condescending; but ere he had given utterance to the remark which was to open this colloquy, Dame Williams intimated that the repast which she had prepared for him was waiting, and he proceeded to take his seat at the festive board.

The table at which Sir Alfred Sinclair, for that was the designation of this exalted personage, seated himself, was furnished with a motley array of substantial viands, and several *bottrines* of rich wines, which, notwithstanding the absence of costly flasks, could not have offended the most fastidious palate. A delicate ragout, the manufacture of which had exhausted the artistical ability of the hostess, confronted the chair appropriated to Sir Alfred, while a monstrous ham, which stood in tempting juxtaposition with a round of beef, was the most prominent object at the lower end of the table. The salt-stands were placed in the centre of the table, marking the line which separated the vassals from their lord; and as it was usual, at that period, for master and servant to sit at the same board, this barrier served to distinguish their caste; those of the gentle blood sitting above, and those of mean parentage below the salt.

The meal was soon dispatched, for neither Sir Alfred nor the minstrel partook of it with relish, and the appetites of the remainder of the party were too keen to dwell long upon the ceremonies which then prefaced repletion. But though Sir Alfred ate little, he drank deeply; and Master Williams smiled at the compliment which was awarded to his cellar, while his dame frowned at the neglect which the productions of the kitchen experienced. At length Sir Alfred rose from the table, and, resuming his easy chair by the fire, furnished the hostess with a pretext for removing the eatables, which she feared the men-at-arms, by renewing hostilities, would entirely demolish. Thus driven from their leaguer, the men-at-arms betook themselves to the fire, and sitting down on the side opposite to that occupied by their lord, amused themselves with watching the figurations of the fuel.

"I think you said that child was nobly born," said Sir Alfred, turning to Dame Williams, who, with her husband, had retired to a respectful distance from their guest, "Who, then, are his parents?"

"I don't know, so please your lordship," replied the dame, curtsying. "All I know about him is—"

But here the loquacious hostess received an unexpected interruption from the hitherto quiescent husband, who, pulling her by the sleeve, asked her, in a respectful whisper, if she had lost her senses. Irritated by an enquiry which implied the possibility of such a bereavement, and much more incensed that it should emanate from her loving spouse, the dame covertly replied by pinching his arm; and saying aloud, in an affectionate tone, "Yes, my dear, I remember it," advanced a few paces nearer the fire.

"It is now four years ago, my lord," she said, making a profound curtesy to Sir Alfred Sinclair, "on just such a night as this, snow and tempest, and about the eve of midnight, that a person on horseback galloped up to the hostelry door. I and my husband were just going to bed, for there was no company in the house, when we heard the tramp of the horse's feet approaching. The next moment there came such a rap at the door, that the whole house shook. My husband ran to see who it was, and, having done so, started back as if he had seen a ghost——"

"By our Lady!" cried Williams, who seemed to be struck with some sudden reminiscence, "I think I saw her to-night."

"Pshaw, my dear!" remonstrated his better half, "Pshaw, my dear!" and Williams, who was a connoisseur of tones, and detected a sort of menace in the voice of his wife, slunk back to his silent corner. "Well, my lord," she continued, enacting a second curtesy to Sir Alfred, "the ghost turned out to be a mere woman. Zooks! she was as white as a sheet; and her clothes, covered with snow, looked like the shroud of a corpse. She carried a baby in her arms; but, though he was wrapped in flannel, the poor child seemed dead o' cold. As for the woman, her hair was hanging over her neck, and her eyes were staring round in her head, as if she——"

"But what did she say about the child?" interrupted Sir Alfred, anxiously.

"I was going to tell you, my lord," rejoined the hostess, somewhat annoyed at the interpolation of Sir Alfred. "She told me, that the child was the son of a great baron, that his mother had died in giving him birth, and that his father had been killed in battle. She said, if we would take charge of the child for a few years, we would be well paid for our trouble; and she gave us——how much was it?" she asked of her husband.

Master Williams, roused by this inquiry, was about to state the exact sum, when a private signal from his wife, who was notorious for keeping secret the economy of her household, induced him to plead a defective memory. This reciprocity of forgetfulness on so important a particular, while all the others were so accurately remembered, occasioned considerable merriment among some of the company, and the dame was so disconcerted at the interruption, that, as Sir Alfred did not request her to continue her narration, she

returned sulkily to the bench occupied by her husband, on whom, as was her wont, she privately vented the spleen which others had excited.

If the esquire and the men-at-arms had observed the countenance of their master while they were laughing at the convenient memories of their host and hostess, they could not but have noticed the pallor with which it was overspread, and the lurid and unnatural expression which gleamed in his eyes; but, as this diversion of their attention afforded him time to assume some control over his feelings, all traces of emotion had vanished before he was again subject to their scrutiny. The minstrel alone had observed them, but he himself exhibited no symptoms of inquietude. He gazed, indeed, on the pallid features of his lord, who was too much absorbed in thought to be conscious of the *surveillance*, but if there was more passion than usual in his glance, it was too gentle, too slight, too imperceptible to attract observation. He raised his harp as Sir Alfred began to recover his self-possession; and, drawing his fingers rapidly over the wires, seemed to be lost in a profundity of thought. Sir Alfred marked his abstraction, which, as he wished to hide his own, he resolved to dispel.

“Are you composing a ballad for our entertainment, good Walter?” he asked, with a grim and doubtful smile, “or does a vision of the future awaken your muse? Prithee, let us have your lay, and if it be love, so much the better, as it will suit my present temper. I will then retire to my chamber, whither, Sir Minstrel, I shall require your presence.”

Thus called upon, the minstrel signified his willingness to obey by a bow; and, striking his harp, accompanied its notes with a lyric.

The Lay of the Minstrel.

The moon doth look on tree and brook,
 On castle, hill, and plain;
 The stars above, their watch of love
 With vigilance maintain;
 And in her bower, in lonely tower,
 Fair Rose de la Monde doth lay;
 And still she cries, with tears and sighs,
 “What keeps my knight away?”

“My Harry dear, that ne’er didst fear
 The crest of mortal foe,
 Art thou this hour in lady’s bow’r,
 That thou dost linger so?
 Ah yes! I ween, thy cruel queen,
 While here I trembling stay,
 A spell hath found thee to surround,
 And me with woe to slay.”

Then ceased the fair, for on the stair
 She heard a stranger tread,
 And stranger none that stair had won
 Unless by traitor led ;
 For maze of wood around there stood,
 To guard her from the queen ;
 And silken clue, no mortal knew
 Save Harry's self, I ween.

Alas ! alas ! that such a pass
 Should ever have befall !
 Alas a day ! that minstrel's lay
 Of such should have to tell !
 But sooth to sing, by silken string
 The labyrinth led through,
 The queen hath won, that bower lone,
 Where the world's choice flower grew.

" Sweet, drink this draught ! " she said, and laugh'd
 The laugh of deadly ire ;
 " This poison cup, or drink it up,
 Or by this steel expire !
 Nay, ne'er despond, fair Rosamonde,
 King Henry is not nigh,
 And thou must up, with the poison cup,
 Or by the dagger die ! "

The moon doth look, on tree and brook,
 On castle, hill, and plain ;
 The stars above, their watch of love
 With vigilance maintain ;
 But not in bower, in lonely tower,
 Rests Rose de la Monde to night,
 But in the grave, where rest the brave,
 And beautiful, and bright !

As the minstrel concluded his performance, which elicited a buzz of applause from his auditors, Sir Alfred expressed his intention of retiring to his chamber. Williams, stimulated by some whispered abuse from his wife, attended to show him the way ; and Sir Alfred, followed by the minstrel, proceeded to the dormitory. Notwithstanding that it was the best which the house afforded, this chamber presented an appearance widely dissimilar to the lodging which Sir Alfred Sinclair usually occupied. A pallet bed, and a few other articles of furniture, served only to render its nakedness more conspicuous ; and the feeble light of a lamp, though seconded by a fire which had recently been kindled on the hearth, was insufficient to dissipate the gloom. The lofty walls were panelled with stained oak, and, save a large white crucifix which surmounted the door, were entirely destitute of relief or adornment.

Having dismissed his host, and, by locking the door, secured himself from external intrusion, Sir Alfred threw himself on an oaken settle near the fire, and, covering his face with his hands, muttered an imprecation on his own head. Unable any longer to control emotions which he had resisted rather than repressed, he allowed them to escape in passionate gestures and muttered curses, while it was evident, from the contortion of his features and the clenching of his fists, how headlong was the moral commotion from which he was suffering. In a short time, however, he acquired a sufficient mastery over his feelings to recollect the imprudence of such a display; and turning to the minstrel, who had hitherto stood, apparently unconscious of his perturbation, at the door, he beckoned him to a settle on the opposite side of the fire.

"It has been said by clerks, good Walter," he remarked, when the minstrel had seated himself as he directed, "that a man's face is the key to his heart; and that whatsoever is his ruling passion, is depicted on his brow. Now I have noted—I speak not to offend, Sir Minstrel—that there is that in your countenance which says, if I opine justly, you dare do deeds that common men would deprecate; and yet, though others might think your manners churlish, I ween you have a heart, good Walter, that can feel for the woes, and avenge the wrongs, of a friend."

Whatever the speaker might have thought, his opinion of the minstrel's heart was expressed in a tone which, with the context, insinuated that virtue was not essential to the moral government of humanity: and the minstrel, who thus construed it, modelled his rejoinder accordingly. "I have often dared much to serve a friend," he said, "and I was never turned from my purpose, Baron of Arkton, by a priest's ravings or a fool's fears. True, I have been in your service only a short time; but, from my having served you at all, you have a lawful claim to my friendship. Tell me, then, your wishes, and doubt not, my lord, but they will be fulfilled."

"I thank you, Walter," returned the Baron, "for this averment of your readiness; but it is deeds, not words, that I seek at your hands."

The Baron paused, apparently expecting that the minstrel would reply; but he remained silent, and the former resumed: "Moreover, Walter, the deed which I would speak of, requires a still tongue as well as a ready hand—a wise head as well as a dauntless heart."

"I commend not myself, my lord," said the minstrel coldly. "If you doubt me, why choose me, of all your followers, for this secret enterprise—for secret, I ween, you intend to keep it;—and why think me unworthy, when in all good faith, I proffer you my services?"

"Be not chafed, Sir Minstrel," replied the Baron, attempting to smile, "for I will answer your questions with candour. With other men, I confess, I would stoop to palter; but with you, who would detect my duplicity, I will deal bluntly. I choose

you, then, because, as I said before, there is that in your face which betrays what you would fain hide, a fellowship with evil;—and I noticed to night, when my other followers were moved by the tricks of yon deserted bastard, that you met his intrusion with a churlish rebuke, and seemed anxious that he should be visited with indign punishment. By minute incidents, good Walter, the characters of men may often be educed; and therefore, though I might have doubted the verity of your countenance, I have other and sufficient evidence of your misanthropy.”

“ You pay me a compliment which I will endeavour to deserve, my lord,” said the minstrel, whose equanimity seemed altogether imperturbable.

“ Compliments are not the coin with which I propose to reward you,” rejoined Sir Alfred, “ and, as we now understand one another, I will proceed to the immediate matter, premising, good Walter, that a hundred broad pieces, in addition to this brilliant, which I give you as earnest, will be your wages if you undertake this business.”

“ And now, my lord, that you have named the guerdon, perhaps you will name the duty,” observed the minstrel.

“ ’Tis well,” replied the Baron, taking from his vest a sacred relic, which, chastely set in gold, was attached to a guard of the same costly material, and thereby secured round his neck; “ but you must first swear—swear on this fragment of the true cross—that you will never divulge, to saint or sinner, man or devil, friend or foe, the secret I now intrust to you, and which, I find, at least one woman is in possession of.”

There was something of a sneer in the tone in which the minstrel replied; “ Knowing me, Baron of Arkton, as you say you do, to have fellowship with evil, or, to speak bluntly, with the author of evil, I marvel that you think a priest’s bauble could assure you of my silence, or that I would regard an oath with greater awe than an unsanctified promise.”

“ At present, Walter,” rejoined the baron, “ you may not; but when death lays his icy hand on your faculties, then you may be visited with compunction, and, betraying the confidence I am about to repose in you, implicate me in your confession.”

“ Your secret must be important, my lord, to need such an outwork,” observed the minstrel, “ and therefore, though I would keep my promise equally sacred, I will take the oath.”

The minstrel, as he ceased speaking, fell on his knees; and, swearing that he would never reveal the secret intrusted to him, kissed the relic, and resumed his seat.

“ That child whom you repulsed to night,” said the Baron, “ that bold boy whom you would have chastised, *must die*.”

“ I do not faint at a proposal so harmless,” replied the minstrel, shrugging his shoulders, “ but I would fain know wherefore he is to suffer.”

“ His mother,” cried Sir Alfred, starting from his seat, “ his mother, the only woman I ever loved—start not, for I did love

her, by Heavens!—cursed me with her last gasp. Yes! with her imageless eyes fixed on death, even with the death-rattle ringing in her throat, she cursed me; she did, by God!” he continued, with increased excitement, “and therefore I hate her. I hate her nameless issue, I hate the dead man for whom I was rejected, and, by my soul! I will quench my hatred in the blood of them all.”

The Baron, while he thus expressed his determination, exhibited every sign of the most intense passion. His complexion became livid, his eyes rolled in their sockets, the veins of his forehead were swollen almost to bursting, and he gave a terrific emphasis to his words by striking his clenched fist on the table.

“If you wish this business to remain a secret,” observed the minstrel, entirely unmoved by the demeanour of his master, “you had better speak in a lower tone, my lord. Besides, ’twere well to make sure of the identity of the child; for, by the woman’s account, he has been four years in the house, and, during that time, you cannot have seen him. You know not but that the story of his noble birth is a fabrication.”

“Listen, Walter,” replied Sir Alfred, “and I will prove to you that it is but too true. Suspicion crossed me directly I saw his face; but, though the likeness was so apparent as to awaken the surprise of all, I needed further evidence before I could be convinced. A scarlet cross, which nature has stamped upon his breast, proved to me that he was the same child that I had condemned to death at the moment of his birth, and I was fully confirmed in this opinion by the story of the loquacious hostess.”

“Gramercy, my lord!” rejoined the minstrel, “I marvel, if you purposed his death directly after he was born, that you did not then see to its execution.”

“I would have done so, Walter,” returned the Baron, “had I not trusted to a villain.”

The minstrel expressed his disapprobation of the epithet by shrugging his shoulders.

“Aye; and a traitor too,” continued the Baron, “for never did there breathe a more arrant lorel than Hubert Cromwell. He paid dearly for his treachery however. I suspected him from the first, though he assured me the child was murdered, and actually produced a mutilated corpse. I watched him too, and, having traced him several times to a neighbouring town, I waited one night for his return; and, meeting him in the middle of the Tone ford, I stabbed him, and threw him from his horse into the water. I tell you this, good Walter, that you may know I am not to be played with, and that, where I place confidence, I am vigilant and suspicious.

“You will have no more need to suspect me henceforward than you have had hitherto,” said the minstrel proudly. “But the deed cannot, of course, be done here: and I know not how we can carry him off privately.”

“I have thought of that, good minstrel,” replied Sir Alfred.

“ We will leave this place at dawn, and, during the confusion which our sudden departure will create, you can steal the child from his bed without attracting notice. If he be asleep, carry him off, and ride slowly forward ; but if he awaken, and raise an alarm, make shorter work of it. You know your guerdon, which, if you do the business well, shall be doubled. And now, Walter, slip down to the hall ; and mind, the child sleeps in the farther corner.”

Thus dismissed, the minstrel, after enacting his usual obeisance, retired from the dormitory of his lord ; and, descending stealthily to the hall, found his comrades stretched in a heap before the fire.

CHAPTER III. THE APPARITION.

OF THE MANNER IN WHICH THE MINSTREL PERFORMED HIS PROMISE—
 THE ABDUCTION OF HENRY—THE DEPARTURE OF SIR ALFRED—
 THE PURSUIT BY WILLIAMS—SIR ALFRED RETURNS—THE CAUSE
 OF THE PURSUIT—SIR ALFRED RENEWS HIS JOURNEY—OF THE
 CONVERSATION OF WHITTINGTON THE ELDER, AND HIS COMPANION,
 VASSALS OF SIR ALFRED—THE HISTORY OF THE SINCLAIR
 FAMILY—OF THE QUARREL BETWEEN WHITTINGTON AND HIS
 SPOUSE—OF THE GHOST OF HUBERT CROMWELL—OF THE
 MANNER IN WHICH THE MINSTREL DISPOSED OF HENRY, AND OF
 THE ORDERING OF THE BARON'S RECEPTION AT THE CASTLE—
 THE BARON'S CHAMBER—THE CONFERENCE WITH THE MINSTREL—
 THE MIDNIGHT MEETING—THE PROJECTED ASSASSINATION
 INTERRUPTED BY THE APPARITION OF HUBERT CROMWELL—
 THE FLIGHT OF THE BARON'S COMPANION—THE BARON'S
 CONFUSION—MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF THE CHILD.

ON the morning which was ushered in by the conversation detailed in the last chapter, at a little before the untimely hour of six, the Baron of Arkton and his retinue were ready to renew their journey, It could hardly be called morning; for in the sky, which had been abstersed by the heavy fall of snow on the preceding night, the galaxy was still visible, and not a solitary ray of light, save that which the stars emitted, announced the dawn of the sluggish day. The ground, the trees, every object on which the eye could rest, was clad in a surcoat of snow, which, though it was considerably more than a foot in profundity, was rendered impervious to the foot by a current frost. The cold was intense, and the circumambient scene was the perfect presentment of the gloomy. The five horses, which stood ready caparisoned before the hostelry door, waited impatiently for the spur which was to set them in motion, and the two men-at-arms who held them, and who were equally alive to the influence of the frost, could scarcely withstand their attempts at emancipation. At length the minstrel issued from the hostelry, and, taking the rein of his horse in his left hand, was about to mount; but one of the men-at-arms rudely interposed, and bade him wait the presence of the Baron, from whom, according to the etiquette which then prevailed, the signal for mounting was to emanate. Sir Alfred, who was too much interested in the proceedings of the minstrel to lose sight of him for any length of time, made his appearance at this critical moment; and, apprehensive that his detention would bring

to light a scheme which he wished to conceal, vociferated an order or his instant release. The minstrel, having mounted his horse, pushed forwards into a gentle canter; and the baron and his esquire breaking into the same pace, the two men-at-arms brought up the rear at their leisure.

The foremost of the party had not advanced a hundred yards, however, when a shout which issued from the hostelry, and which was followed by the personal appearance of Master Williams and his spouse, deranged, for the moment, the order of their march. It was a matter of surprise, to three of the company, that the baron exhibited much confusion at this incident. Nevertheless, to do him justice, he did not seem to hear the stentorophonic halloo to which the lungs of his quondam host gave utterance, but when, on directing his followers to expedite their movements, that circumstance was respectfully intimated to him by his esquire, it was somewhat singular, the latter person thought, that he persisted in his commands to proceed. Williams, however, was not thus to be evaded. Though not fleet of foot, he was so animated by several cheering cries which escaped his irate partner, that he pursued the fugitives some distance, shouting at intervals, when he could muster sufficient breath; and the Baron, fearful that flight would only increase suspicion if any existed, determined at last to confront him himself. He accordingly directed his followers to ride slowly onwards, and, quitting them, returned to meet the breathless Williams. The latter slackened his pace immediately he perceived the intentions of the Baron, who, as the distance between them did not exceed a hundred yards, was soon up with him.

"What seek you?" he cried, with his usual haughtiness.

"The minstrel"—replied Williams, who, being breathless with running, made a sudden stop.

"What has he done?" said the Baron, fearful that a discovery had taken place.

"He has"—but his breath could carry him no further, and Master Williams paused to respire.

Brief as was the interval which the innkeeper required for respiration, and momentary as was the pause which thereupon ensued, he might, had he been gifted with the commonest powers of penetration, have observed something in the aspect of the Baron which was not only strange, but absolutely startling. He would, indeed, have been justified, however important the communication which he was about to make, in transferring his attention from the minstrel to his lord. But Master Williams was by no means a man of the world, or, to speak in plain language, he was not versed in the world's darker practices, and was, consequently, unacquainted with their pathology. Of these, though they were somewhat obscured by the surrounding darkness, the Baron's countenance exhibited the most orthodox outlines. There was the firm, knitted brow that meditates outrage, the fixed eye that beams atrocity, the pursed lip which could sneer

at human suffering, the consciousness of guilt, and the apprehension of discovered crime,—there were all these peering through the pallor of his ashy face, but the eye of Williams could not detect them. Liar! was hanging on the Baron's lips, and the handle of his rapier was in his hand: the enunciation of the epithet would have heralded the death of him to whom it was applied, when, recovering his breath, Williams explained himself.

"He has left his harp behind, my lord," he said, and produced the lyre, which, being otherwise freighted, the minstrel had been unable to carry.

The Baron recovered his equanimity in a moment. "Grammercy, good fellow!" he cried, "you are a careful host. Yon lazy hounds of mine, who like well to hear his carol, should have been more careful of our minstrel's chattels: but prithee keep it now, good host, till we visit your hostelry again."

The Baron spurred his steed into a smart gallop, which he maintained till he had overtaken his company. He then rode up to the right of his esquire, who respectfully explained to him the impropriety which he had committed in returning to Williams; but as his lord did not condescend to answer him, he thought it prudent to defer his remonstrance till some more favourable hour, and he assumed, like the remainder of the party, a moody silence. The country through which they passed, indeed, was not calculated to excite conversation. It was, even in the summer season, dreary; and now that it was covered with snow—which, notwithstanding, considerably improved the road—it presented an aspect of desolation which was really dispiriting. As the morning advanced, however, and the stars imperceptibly retired from the sky, our equestrians became more free and animated; and on passing through a small village with which they seemed to be acquainted, the two hindmost horsemen interchanged their opinions of the weather in language appropriate to the theme. The speakers were the two men-at-arms, who, after they had execrated Jack Frost to their hearts' content, began to expatiate on other and more important topics.

"By my holidame, Dick Whittington!" observed the tallest of the two, "I know not what to make of our Baron of late. From his birth I may say, he has been a gloomy bird, though often a goodly; but latterly, within these few days I mean, he has been sour, nauseous, Dick, quite nauseous."

"You are an excellent judge of a man's temper, no doubt, Rowland," returned the other; "and therefore I marvel, that seeing that I am in no mood for talking, you should still force your prattle on me."

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Rowland, "I warrant me, Dick, you are thinking of that blue-eyed wench I saw you talking with one night. But, ugh!" he cried, as he observed a change creep over the countenance of his companion, "what ails you, Dick? Has your leman proved false?"

"A truce to your gibes, my gaffer," replied Whittington, who was evidently annoyed at the insinuation of his companion, "for by my faith! you could not touch me on a tenderer place. But since you must give the rein to your tongue, malapert, let me hear what you think of this last passage of arms at Taunton. What think you of the Baron's bearing there?"

"Now you have me in a corner, Dick," replied Rowland, "for my father's son should not speak of a Sinclair's defeat. Have at you though! for if he was thrown at last, he held his ground for a gallant space. Truly, then, I think his bearing was knightly, and my malison be on the spear that unseated him."

"Go to!" cried Whittington, smiling, "your judgment is perverted by prejudice. Think you, that unknown knight did not unhorse him gallantly?"

"To your eye, Dick," returned Rowland, "to your eye, mayhap. But heard you never of such things as charms and witchcraft? By St. George! if I had been Marshal of the tourney, I would have arraigned that unknown knight—the Evil One himself for aught we know, for practising art magic. Aye, laugh on, but I tell you, Dick, I never saw a Sinclair thrown before."

"Well," said Whittington, checking the laughter in which he had been indulging, "they must be wonders of chivalry, then. But you are prejudiced, my gossip, and I am free to judge; for you were born in the family, and I am only a stranger servant. To tell you sooth, too, I care not how soon I am discharged."

"Go to, for a fool, then!" rejoined Rowland; "for if Sir Alfred be sullen, which I deny not, no lord in the country is more liberal in largess. Let him but get a lady fair, and mayhap the castle will see old times back again."

"The old times differed from the present, then, I suppose," observed Whittington. "I should like to hear something of your young days, gossip."

"Ah! the times have indeed changed since then, Dick," replied Rowland, mournfully. "The old baron and his son Henry, the elder brother of Sir Alfred, were the finest cavaliers in the country; and Master Alfred, as my lord was then called, was scarce a whit behind them in deeds of chivalry. I was page to Master Henry; and if ever there was a good master, he was one. There was Hubert Cromwell, too, a gallant fellow, and a greater adept at song than our churl of a minstrel there, reared as he has been to the gay science. He and my young lord were always together, and loved each other like born brothers; but at last, on some trifle or other, they fell out; and then Hubert attached himself to Master Alfred, and my lord and he were never friends again."

"And what said the old lord to this?" asked Whittington.

"Oh, he took no notice of it," returned Rowland, "though Hubert and Master Alfred's friendship was talked of by every one else. My master, however, soon offended his father more than he had done Hubert. He married the daughter of some poor knight

who had been killed in the wars, not only without license, but without so much as telling his father. Then, to crown all, he went off as esquire to the Black Prince, and left his lady behind at the castle. His father died; and his poor lady also, having been told of his death—for he was killed in the wars in France—died within the year. The strangest thing, however, relates to Hubert, who disappeared about a month after the poor lady's death; and they say his ghost—our Lady assoil him!—has been seen in the castle very often of late."

"I have heard of this ghost—may God assoilize him!" said Whittington, crossing himself. "And is not this enough to scare you from the castle, my master? I would face the quick any day, and defy them to the death; but dead men——our Lady of Mercy preserve us from their visitations!"

"Amen!" devoutly responded the other. "But you know, gossip Dick, the ghost confines himself to the southern turret—that being the place which Hubert occupied when living; and he has never been known to transgress those bounds, within the which, indeed, he is perfectly quiet and harmless. But to leave this dismal subject, which is not likely to increase our courage, prythee tell me something of your leman, Dick; for the glimpse I had of her proved her to be a fair damsel, and a modest."

"Trouble me not concerning her," cried Whittington, "for all the fire of purgatory, trebly heated, could not purify her of crime. She is false as hell itself."

"Nay, then, Dick," rejoined Rowland, "I grieve that I spoke to thee about her. Be sure, though, as you value your peace, that you have not been hasty in your conclusions."

"Pshaw!" said Whittington, biting his lip till the blood oozed out, "do you think I would take pains to make myself a cuckold? Am I one of those jealous dotards who make their lives miserable with such unprofitable speculations?"

"Not to offend, gaffer," replied Rowland, "but I would say, in sad sooth, I have often thought you were so inclined."

"Zounds!" cried Whittington, "I was an unwilling witness of her guilt. I saw her, with these eyes, fondling with a fellow that she calls her master—a lorel of a merchant, a pale-faced booby of a trader; nay, a Jew, for aught I know. The fellow threw me too, when, on his leaving the cottage, I assailed him. She found me lying there, maltreated by her paramour, vanquished by her seducer; and, when I accused her of her crime, she wept, and said, if I knew all, I would never have struck him."

Whether Whittington's companion believed or doubted this representation of the matter, which will be fully explained in a subsequent chapter of this history, he did not attempt either to impugn or to palliate it; and, as Whittington himself was too full of spleen to renew the conversation, they receded into the silence which their mutual volubility had induced them to break. They had not far to go, however, before they reached the castle of Arkton; of which

building, as it was the ancestral residence of Sir Alfred Sinclair, and the locality to which the horsemen were now journeying, this history must take some notice.

It was situated near the summit of an acclivity, which, though gentle, commanded an extensive view of the surrounding country. The barbican, and the northern and southern wings, formed, with the central portion of the edifice, the great court, or inner ballicun, which was quadrangular in figure; and the keep, or donjon, fronted the portcullised gateway, which defended the approaches. The bastion at the extremity of either wing, surmounted by turrets of considerable dimensions, was illuminated by windows which looked into a contiguous park; and in the north front, facing the rising sun, a beautiful oriel window was pre-eminent. The whole of the other windows, which exhibited such diversity of form as to leave no doubt of the castle having been the undertaking of different ages, were adorned with rich freestone casings; and the various styles in which they were worked did not render them unsightly or even unpleasing. The keep was the only object in the tableau which assimilated with barbarism; and even this gloomy erection, to one of a poetical turn of mind, was not destitute of interest. It was evidently the most ancient piece in the building; and owed its origin, perhaps, to some of the later Saxons. Few could look for the first time on its dark, frowning walls, broken here and there by a narrow loop-hole, without associating them with the romance of chivalry or of crime; and the eye would involuntarily turn from the battlemented top, where a banner waved proudly in the morning breeze, to the broad platform beneath, where many a gallant heart had bitten the dust. Being from its altitude, however, the more conspicuous object, it was a sad incongruence behind the handsome though massy gateway. This was principally composed of freestone, richly wrought; and, though the ornamental workmanship was rather light in its character, it harmonised agreeably as a whole.

The castle stood on a paddock, at the extremity of an extensive deer-park, and was guarded on three sides by a moat of the usual width, which had formerly surrounded the whole. The fourth side, or, rather, the front, was now separated from the road by the rampart only, which, indeed, was a sufficient defence. Facing the barbican, on the opposite side of the road, was a rude cross, having, on a small compartment near the centre, this inscription:

"In Hoc Signo."

As our horsemen approached this edifice, or, rather, as the person of the minstrel, who was considerably ahead of the others, became visible to the watchman over the principal entrance, he announced the circumstance to the garrison by ringing a large alarm-bell, which summoned them forth to greet the return of their lord. The ponderous gate was thrown open, and during the confusion occasioned by the assembling of the men-at-arms, the archers, and the other militants composing the garrison, who afterwards formed themselves

in files on either side of the avenue, the minstrel had an opportunity of retreating to the southern wing of the building unperceived; and, leaving his horse at liberty in the court, he ascended a staircase that led to a turreted chamber, which, after a moment's hesitation, he entered.

The Baron and his train had by this time, amidst a flourish of trumpets, and cries of "Sinclair for ever!" passed beneath the archway of the gate, and emerged between the phalanx which his retainers formed on each side of the roadway. He acknowledged their enthusiastic greetings by throwing some pieces of money amongst them; and, though a few only of the crowd succeeded in obtaining possession of the coin, cries of "Largess! largess! Sinclair for ever!" arose from the whole. The Baron passed on to the castle-hall; and thence, when he had dismissed his attendants, he retired to his chamber.

He seated himself in an easy chair, and folding his right over his left leg, and burying his chin in the palms of his hands, he rested his elbows on his knees, and indulged in meditation. He had remained in this posture but a few minutes, when a rap at the chamber-door announced a visiter, who, at the baron's command, ushered himself into his presence.

"Well, Sir Minstrel," said Sir Alfred, "you have brought your charge safe to the castle, I suppose?"

"Yes, my lord," replied the minstrel,

"'Tis well," observed the Baron. "But did he not waken before you arrived here?"

"He did, my lord," returned the minstrel; "but I showed him this poniard; and partly with kind words, and partly with threats, I contrived to keep him quiet."

"Ah, Walter! Walter!" groaned the Baron, "why did you not use this poniard? You might have done me good service on the road."

"I was afraid of exceeding my instructions, my lord," rejoined the minstrel.

"Why, certes," said the Baron, musing, "I will be better satisfied if I see him die the death. I could strike the blow myself, for I fear not to do the deed; but he is like my mother; and the strongest minds will bend to such deep associations. But where have you bestowed him?"

"In the southern turret, my lord."

"The southern turret!" cried the Baron, springing from his seat. "What—what, in the devil's name, led you thither?"

"Simply, my lord, a wish to escape observation."

"Certes, it will do that," said Sir Alfred, in a sarcastic tone; "for not a man in my pay would enter it alone. There is no place more likely to keep a secret. But the ghost, Sir Minstrel, the ghost——"

"Do you believe in it?" asked the minstrel.

"Such things have been," replied the Baron.

“ Do you fear him ? ”

“ Fear ! ” echoed the baron ; “ fear ! I feared not to strike him down ; and shall I fear him dead ? ”

The baron, as he spoke, endeavoured to regain his composure ; but he could not hide, from an eye so penetrating as that of the minstrel, the shallowness of his pseudo and affected equanimity. The pale cheek, and the quivering lip, betrayed the fears which pride would not descend to acknowledge ; and the beads of cold perspiration that stood on his brow, as well as the ill-dissembled firmness of his voice, showed plainly enough, that he was too deeply imbrued with the superstitious ideas of the age to doubt the existence of the reputed apparition. His credulity, nevertheless, would not have exposed him to the ridicule of his contemporaries. The belief in supernatural visitations was almost universal ; and as it was suffered, if not disseminated, by the clergy, the strongest and haughtiest minds did not scruple to entertain it. There was, notwithstanding, something of contempt in the minstrel’s look, and of irony in his speech, as he renewed the conversation.

“ Will you have the child taken to a less retired part of the castle, my lord ? ”

“ Had you done this at first,” answered the Baron, “ it might have been better : but now—no, let him remain where he is.”

“ What time would you like to visit him, my lord ? ”

“ The Baron hesitated. “ Only I have sworn,” he said, at last, “ to be present when the deed is done, ’twere better you could visit him alone. But wait for me by the turret-door at midnight ; and, if the Devil himself appear, we will about our work.”

The minstrel bowed his acquiescence, and retired from the chamber. He was shortly followed by his lord, who, hurrying down to the great court, assembled his retainers, and strove, by employing his mind in exercising them, to banish the morbid melancholy which the contemplated murder excited. The moments between the conception and execution of an important project, the lingering hours which intervene, the intermediate suspense and deliberation of consequences, are, under any circumstances, productive of the most painful sensations to which humanity is liable ; and though, when motives are sinless, hope gives a feverish and empirical excitation to the healthier organs of our constitution, yet the mischief occasioned by reaction, the lassitude produced by disappointment, and even the revolution caused by the sudden realization of our wishes, is too often irreparable. The time so expended will be found the most unprofitable, as well as the least grateful, in the reckoning of human life. But when the mind ponders on a projected assassination, when every avenue to the heart is guarded by an evil passion, how dreadful, how insupportable must be the agitation which pervades the diseased frame ! Such, from the minstrel’s departure till the hour of midnight, was the condition of Sir Alfred Sinclair ; and it is, therefore, but reasonable to suppose, that, though there could not exist a more resolute soldier in the field, he would be peculiarly open, in such a

state of mind, to all the barbarous superstitions of the era in which he lived. He thought the intervening hours would never expire; but, at length, the appointed time arrived. The Baron wrapped himself in his cloak, and, descending to the hall, emerged into the spacious court.

There was a stillness and darkness around, that well accorded with the undertaking which he was about to superintend. The cold had not in the least diminished, and the ground was still covered with snow, which, besides the unseasonableness of the hour, detained his household within doors; and the only persons who were likely to encounter him were the several sentinels, whose ubiquity he knew well how to avoid. He proceeded, therefore, without interruption, to the southern turret, where, in the shadow of the buttress, he found his confederate. The latter was, like the Baron, muffled up in an ample cloak, that served both to keep him warm and to conceal a lamp, which, when they entered the turret, he drew from its hiding-place.

The Baron and his attendant did not interchange a syllable; but, as they ascended the staircase, the former turned round to look in the other's face, probably to see if he exhibited any sign of fear. His cloak was so arranged, however, that it was impossible to detect either his features or their expression; and the Baron, somewhat disconcerted, moodily renewed his ascension. The summit of the stairs spread into a small passage, whence a narrow door, on either side of the bannister-circled area, opened to the inner apartments. Into one of these the Baron and his companion entered; and though the former thought he heard a retreating footfall as he opened the door, he did not communicate this circumstance to the latter.

The room was small in compass, and exhibited, with the dust and marks of decay which time had suffered to accumulate, the remains of a more costly age. One side, that opposite to the door, was still hung with tapestry, which, however, had lost its primitive complexion; and the oak-roof and panneling, once carved with figures in relief, still presented a handsome appearance. A pallet bed, such as were then in use, was stretched lengthways from the small casement; and towards this bed, on which a child was reposing, the Baron and his attendant bent their steps.

"Strike him on the cross!" said the Baron, in a low voice, as he gently raised the clothes from the sleeper's bosom.

Whatever resolution his confederate might have evinced on former occasions, or however dauntless he might really feel at the passing moment, his hand certainly trembled as he raised his poniard to strike, which he seemed about to do, when a voice, in a sepulchral tone, repeated, "Strike him on the cross!"

The two started round simultaneously; and the interrupted assassin, dropping the lamp, which became extinguished in its descension, ran precipitately from the room, shouting, as he crossed the threshold, "The ghost! the ghost!" The person whom he thus characterised bore little resemblance, beyond pale features and a savage expression of countenance, to the popular representations of castle spectres; but his sudden and unexpected advent, and the

sternness of his air, might have alarmed less guilty persons than Sir Alfred Sinclair, who, shrinking back a few paces, cried, as the lamp became extinct, "Hubert Cromwell!"

The next moment, however, he rushed forward with the energy of despair; but he was unable to discriminate, in the darkness which now prevailed, the slightest vestige of the figure which had alarmed him. He groped his way round the room, and at length returned to the bed. In vain: he discovered no trace of the apparition, which had been as transient as it was abrupt. He felt in the bed for the child: his heart beat quick, and he scratched his own hand with the poniard in his agitation; but—*the child was gone!*

CHAPTER IV. THE VAULT.

SHOWING HOW THE BARON DISCOVERED A SECRET PASSAGE—HOW HE ENTERED THEREIN, AND OF THE MYSTERIOUS SOUNDS WHICH HE THERE HEARD—HOW THE FUGITIVES WERE PURSUED BY THE BARON, AND HOW AN ACCIDENT BEFELL THEM—HOW THE BARON WAS INTERRUPTED IN THE PURSUIT, AND WHAT FURTHER HAPPENED.

THE revolutions of the human mind are often as instantaneous as they are wonderful; and thus, in the succession of vicissitudes, reason is either altogether null, or assumes a greater perspicuity than is attendant on a state of quietude. A consequence of the latter assumption is, the abrupt change which the passions frequently undergo; and, further, the opposition of this change. No emotion, perhaps, is so soon subdued, or, rather, so easily wrought into its direct antithesis, as fear; and yet none is more absolute while it endures. In some constitutions, indeed, fear will undermine consciousness; and, though the latter generally recovers its dominion on the subversion of the former, it sometimes suffers a lasting eclipse. This, however, was not the case with the nervous mind of Sir Alfred. He no sooner discovered that the child had been taken from the bed, and that the apparition which he beheld had vanished, than he became convinced, that, under the mask of supernatural agency, some real and interested person had robbed him of his prey. He paused but a moment, but in that brief interlapse, a flood of incidents, which had transpired years before, were recalled to his memory; and the evil passions of his nature, which his fears had only discomposed, were again awakened to fury. He had failed, then, in his expectations, he thought, and Hubert Cromwell, whom he imagined his own hand had slain, had a second time thwarted his purpose. But then, if such were the case, if Hubert were really alive, how could he have been deceived so long? and how, in his own castle, could such an imposture escape detection? The Baron did not tarry to satisfy himself on these points; but, having discovered a secret outlet behind the tapestry, resolved to pursue the disguised interloper.

The passage in which he found himself, descended into the wall of the bastion, from the exterior of which a worked crevice admitted air; and was about five feet in altitude, and two and a half in breadth. The bottom was formed of a succession of stone steps,

with which the roof descended obliquely: and on one of the sides, both of which were streaming with unwholesome moisture, was a banister, to help the descent. When he had gone a little way down the passage, which slightly decreased in width as he progressed, he became aware that some person was retiring before him; and the sound of a retreating footstep, and the cry of a child, which the narrowness of the place rendered audible at some distance, made him more eager in the pursuit. He drew his sword from its sheath, and was hastening on with increased celerity, when, to his utter amazement, a voice shouted to him in his rear. Could it be the delusion of an excited imagination? He paused and the sound ceased; but, directly he renewed his descent, the voice was again audible. Resolved, however, to persist in the pursuit, the Baron pushed on, and in a few moments, was once more in hearing of the retreating foot. At length a door was slammed to, and then, though he paused twice to listen, he heard nothing but the voice behind him, whose shouts ceased whenever he halted. The Baron, nevertheless, continued the pursuit; and on reaching a closed door, which he found was fastened on the other side, he assailed it with such energetic kicks, that the crazy fastenings gave way, and, as he pronounced a malediction on the fugitive, the door flew open. A greece of broken steps led him into a subterranean vault, where, as he is little deserving of the reader's sympathy, this history will proceed to notice the fugitive.

He was about twenty yards in advance of the Baron, and was increasing the distance at every stride. The child whom he bore in his arms was crying; but probably his cries were induced by dismay at the darkness of the vault, for he did not seem to fear the man by whom he was transported; and who, whenever a cry burst from him, kissed him fondly. When he heard the door give way behind him, he clung closer to the bosom of the man; and, with a discretion beyond the years of childhood, restrained his cries. At this critical moment, when their capture seemed inevitable, the man stumbled; and the Baron, who heard him fall, shouted in exultation. The fugitive groaned; a few strides, which his pursuer's feet were rapidly diminishing, and he would stand, unarmed and hapless, at the mercy of his mortal enemy. He crept softly to the side of the humid vault, and with a hope that the Baron would pass on without discovering his ubiety, which, without he groped his way by the wall, might possibly happen, determined to abide his fate. He was not long in suspense as to the course which his pursuer would adopt. The latter, on reaching the spot where, as he correctly supposed, the fugitive had stumbled, arrested his steps: and hearing no sound which denoted the vicinity of human beings, seemed, by his remaining stationary, to be undecided how to act. His breathing sounded like a death-watch in the ears of the other, whose hand, pressing the child's fluttering heart, returned its rapid vibration. It was a dreadful moment; and the bravest men, who could look complacently on instant death, would have felt their energies freeze under so severe a test; but, though no agent was visible, intervention was at hand.

"Could it be a spirit, indeed?" cried the Baron, somewhat startled at the solemn silence which ensued.

"Indeed?" repeated a voice at the upper end of the vault.

The Baron felt an involuntary thrill pervade his frame. "Hubert!" he cried, at length.

"Hubert!" exclaimed the mysterious voice.

"Traitor!" vociferated the Baron, assuming the firmness which he did not feel, "do you think to beguile me with your mountebank juggleries? Disclose your person, and here, a second time, you shall feel the weight of my vengeance!"

"Peace, Baron of Arkton!" answered the voice, "call not the dead from purgatory; but rather hie, ere thou see'st what thou shouldst not, to the regions of day."

"Traitor! devil! impostor! be thou what thou wilt," shouted the Baron, "reveal thyself!"

"I am the evil genius of thy house," returned the voice. "When my form is seen, be it midnight or morn, feast or fast, bridal or burial, a Sinclair dies! And know, that the life thou seekest to-night, though it were in thy hands, thou could'st not destroy; for ere thy dagger strike him dead, thou can'st not but look on me."

The Baron had been retiring in the direction of the voice, which retreated before him, for some minutes: but, as he approached the door which he had previously forced, he fell over the steps at its foot. He uttered a fiendish imprecation, which was echoed by the mysterious voice; and, grasping his sword in a firmer clutch, started to his feet.

The bearer of the child thought this accident, which, though he could not see it, the noise made known to him, afforded a favourable opportunity of renewing his flight; but the clatter of his feet, whose heavy tread was reverberated by the paved floor, acquainted the Baron with his purpose.

The chase was immediately recommenced; and each party being nerved with a powerful incitement, and there being, moreover, a nearly equal balance of strength, the issue was for some minutes doubtful. The Baron, indeed, would probably have relinquished the pursuit, in which so many obstacles seemed combined to thwart him, if the fugitive had remained in his covert a few moments longer; but when he heard the retreating footsteps, issuing, too, from the place where, as he had opined, the person he sought was concealed, he concluded, as before, that he was being made the dupe of an artfully contrived imposition. It occurred to him, with some show of reason, that the voice which professed to emanate from the evil genius of his house, and whose assertions, at first, he had been inclined to credit, might be that of the minstrel, whom he now suspected of playing a double part; but how to account for the connexion which must then exist between him and Hubert, or even for the seeming resurrection of the latter, was beyond his comprehension. The fact was, that, in the dreadful excitation of the moment, he confounded the minstrel

and Hubert together; and his ideas succeeded each other so rapidly, and were consequently thrown into such a promiscuous heap, that they were entirely inseparable.

The fugitive kept his way as steadily as the damp, slippery floor would permit; and, if he was in danger of falling, his pursuer was liable to a like interruption. The child hid his face in the folds of his doublet—for, unlike the generality of ghosts, the man wore the garments of this more substantial world—and whenever he slipped, which he did frequently without falling, his little charge made a bound, as though he would leap from his arms. The fugitive knew that he was approaching a door, which, as he could secure it on the other side, would interpose an effectual check to the Baron's progress; and he doubted not but that he would have time, if he succeeded in this particular, to gain the exterior of the castle unopposed. He knew, too, that the door was open, so that no delay was necessary on the side where delay was dangerous. The opacity, however, was so dense, that no eye could distinguish the outline of the door; and he was obliged to maintain his most vigorous pace, when it was equally essential that he should proceed with circumspection, in order to keep a few yards in advance of his pursuer. He heard the sententious respirations of the latter alternately with his own; but, though the peril was so contiguous, he did not despair. The door of hope was close at hand; another, another, and another stride, and he must attain it. His eyes strained from their sockets into the darkness before him; but the vision, intense and painful as the effort was, could not detect the beacon. He felt a heavy, deafening blow on his forehead; he had run against the side of the open door, and was thrown back into a small crypt in the vault.

A cry from the child, whom the violence of the concussion had almost bereft of sense, directed the Baron to the spot where they lay; and, groping along by the wall, he discovered the indentation made by the crypt. Hubert had previously deposited the child in the bottom of the crypt; and having assumed an erect posture, and drawn three deep respirations, he prepared to struggle with his adversary. The latter, however, did not, as Hubert expected, grope in search of his person; but, directly he made out the crypt, drew back a few paces, and launched a blow of his sword at its inmates. Hubert received it on his left shoulder; but disregarding the wound, which, indeed, was not important, he sprang on the Baron before he could repeat the blow; and, putting forth all his strength, attempted to throw him. But though this assault was unexpected, the Baron was too powerful to afford an easy conquest; and each opposed to his antagonist a staunch and immovable barrier. Hubert began to feel his muscles relax; and though he was aware of a corresponding weakness in the resistance to his strength he was unable to make any effort which would turn this circumstance to his advantage. At this juncture, when the spirits of both began to flag, the Baron received a blow from a muscular and invincible arm; and, relinquishing his opposition to Hubert, he fell senseless to the ground.

CHAPTER V. THE RECOGNITION.

A CROWNER'S QUEST IS CONVENED AT THE HOSTELRY, AND A SATISFACTORY VERDICT IS RETURNED—A CERTAIN MERCHANT RECOGNISES THE BODY OF GERTRUDE WHITTINGTON, AND, AFTER A CONFERENCE WITH WILLIAMS, PROCEEDS TO ARKTON CASTLE.

ON the morning of the 1st of February, 1364, a little after the hour of breaking fast, the hostelry of the St. George and the Dragon, situate at the extremity of the village of Taunton-Deans, was the scene of an occurrence of more than ordinary interest. The hostelry itself, as it belonged to a race of hotels which are now extinct, may, perhaps, merit attention.

The exterior presented no greater pretensions to architectural uniformity than the adjoining hovels, which, with a few more respectable tenements and a small church, comprised the village; but still, though it was equally destitute of ornament, it was of a different style of building. The elevation was two stories, terminating in a gable, thatched with straw; and the front, which was composed of red brick, occupied a site of nearly thirty feet in length. The door was divided into an upper and lower compartment, as was usual at all the hostelries of the time, and was surmounted by a large board, which, besides intimating the accommodation which might be procured within, bore the sign—"The Sancte George and the Dragonne." A stable, very unassuming in its aspect, was attached to the left end; and towards the right, a little in advance of the house, was a rude trough, similar in shape to those which still constitute an appurtenance to rural inns. Halfway between the road and the hostelry, about a dozen feet from either, were two fine old elms, and round the trunks of these trees, on seats which seemed equally ancient, the fathers of the hamlet had been wont to gather for ages anterior.

The inside of the hostelry was divided into two compartments, one of which, thence called the hall, was devoted to the reception of guests; and the other, to the domestic and culinary arrangements of the family. The hall was a spacious and airy apartment, lighted by a large bay-window, of the Gothic order, and two smaller casements, which antiquated cobwebs had somewhat obscured. The walls were panelled with stained elm, and decorated with three or four trophies of the chase, composed, principally, of the skulls and antlers of defunct stags; and the roof, which was gable-formed, was supported

by rafters of massy dimensions, adorned with rude though elaborate carving. The range, or grate, was formed of four perpendicular iron bars, which supported the sides and transverse pieces that held the fire. The chimney was thrown round in front, in a half-circle; and on either side, within this boundary, were raised seats of cemented brick. A shelf, which ran round the exterior of the chimney, supported three others, which were divided into numerous and irregular squares, and painted a sombre green colour. On the first shelf, arranged with due respect to their size, were paraded the bright brass lamps of the establishment; and above them, placed with the same regard for order, were wooden punch-bowls, hooped with tin, and garnished with little heaps of dried lemon-peel. Last, not least, were arranged several stone jars, which, though rude in their formation, contained, no doubt, liquor beyond price.

In one of the two recesses, which the chimney formed at the further end of the hall, and separated from the hall itself by a low barrier of wood, was the buttery, or bar. This was occupied on three sides by broad shelves, two of which were furnished in a similar manner to those above the chimney; and one, that opposite to the side of the chimney, was loaded with substantial and inviting eatables. From one of three poles of ash, which crossed the buttery at the top, were suspended some pieces of uncooked beef and a flitch of bacon; several strings of onions, and a piece of hung-beef, dangled from the others.

It was in this apartment that, at the time specified at the commencement of this chapter, a short and rather corpulent woman, whose hard features augured a morose disposition, was washing the limbs of an infant of recent birth; and occasionally, as the helpless babe gave utterance to a shrill cry, inflicting on its back a slap of her open hand. This cruelty, though almost unnatural, was not out of character with the woman's appearance, than which nothing could be more repulsive or disagreeable. Her dress alone, notwithstanding that it was in conformity with the costume then current, was so ill adapted to her face and figure, so calculated to reveal every personal defect, that few could have looked on her without disgust. Her jacket was made of derk, and fitted tight to her person. It curved, from the centre of the waist, into two pointed lappets, which fell over her hips, where, attached to one of the lappets, a bunch of keys was dangling by a cord. Her petticoat was of an inconvenient length, both before and behind, and trailed several inches on the ground, entirely concealing, and perhaps impeding, the motions of her feet. Her hood, which resembled in shape the dunce's cap of a village-school, was worn close till it reached her chin, whence it descended, in a semi-circular tippet, over her shoulders and back.

"A malison on thee!" she cried, as she shook the child with both her hands; "your dam has escaped a saucy brat. Bodikins! but you shall change your quarters to-day. The parish must go to charges for you, must it, you whip?"

The speaker was here interrupted by the entrance of a third person, over whom, it seemed, she had a more legitimate right to

exercise her authority. He was rather low in stature; but he made up for his parvitute by a proportionate rotundity of bulk; and his rubicund visage, save for a certain expression of the eye, atoned for his want of beauty.

"So ho, jackanapes!" shouted the woman, as the intruder, taking off his hat, seated himself on a settle near the door, "you're going to turn fine gentleman, I ween! Stir yourself, sirrah, and scatter some sand over the floor; or the Crowner will be here before the place is ready."

"Hasn't the Crowner come yet, then?" asked the other, as he rose to obey the woman's bidding.

"Dost see him?" asked the virago.

Williams—for he it was—did not return any answer to this inquiry; for it was expressed in a tone which, in his experienced judgment, forbade a reply. He therefore proceeded to sand the floor in silence, and, when he had accomplished this task, applied himself to the arrangement of other household matters. Round an expansive table, which stood in the centre of the room, he placed several long settles, that, notwithstanding their weight, he handled with easy dexterity. Scarcely had he effected this disposition of the furniture, which his wife was beginning to vituperate, when a tall and portly individual, followed by a living shadow of a man, who bore a ponderous book and inkhorn, marched at a solemn and regular pace into his presence.

"Good morrow, mine host!" he cried, seizing Williams by the hand, and at the same time dropping a familiar nod to the hostess. "How fares your house, gossip?"

Before Williams could reply, he was accosted by the slim personage, who, imitating the action and manner of his superior, cried, "Good morrow, mine host! How fares your house, gossip?"

"Why, sirs," replied Williams, "Providence is bountiful, I may say; and, but for this sad business——"

"Sad business!" cried the visitors simultaneously; "it's a *felo de se*, then, is it?"

Williams, who was unacquainted with law terms, and thought that a *felo de se* meant a sudden death, replied in the affirmative.

"Haste, Whittal, and summon the jurors!" cried the portly man to his slender companion.

The slender man vanished.

"And now, mine host," continued the portly stranger, who, as his language bespoke him, was the Coroner,* or, as he was then called, Crowner of the district, "give me a cup of your oldest October.

* In the "Lex Coronatoria," by Edward Umfreville, it is stated, that, by the statute 1., Edward 2d, cap. 1, the office of Crowner was usually held by Knights of Tenure, or Freeholders, having the annual income of £20. This class of Knights constituted the "*milites habentes terram*," in contra-distinction to the Knights of Chivalry, or "*milites non habentes terram*, and were the grade between the Aristocracy and the Sokemen, or those who held by the plough.

The duties of the Crowner were multifarious. He had to test all weights and measures in his district, keep the pleas of the peace, and record all matters which appertained to the peace and good government of the county.

I warrant me, this case would puzzle your common crowners, and your burghers, and your juries, and your sokemen; but, mark me, mine host; mark my mastery of the law, and see how the evidence will be canvassed, and weighed, and cut up, and exposed, and examined, and delivered. I trow there be few crowners, my gaffer, so well read in the law; and few, furthermore, so honest in their vocation. Ho, ho, mine host! this flagon has a false bottom. There, there, fill it up again, and we'll say no more about it. But tell me, now you have replenished the cup, what are the premises of this case?"

"Why, Sir Crowner," said Williams, "there's the tenement, and the stable, and the——"

"Ay," said the Crowner, "but the premises of the casualty, or, if you like it better, of the *felo de se*?"

"She's laid out in the stable," answered Williams.

"Good," rejoined the Crowner: "but the circumstance, the particulars, the facts, the evidences, and the witnesses, mine host?"

"I'm the only one," replied Williams.

"Oh! and you say it is *felo de se*. Then there will be no need of the malefactor's body, good gaffer. Your testimony, as a substantial man, is sufficient; and the jury must pronounce the verdict without advice. The Jezebel! she deserves to be buried in a cross-road, I trow. Howbeit, if a Crowner might speak his mind, 'twere better to let women have their own way in this matter: for, believe me, mine host, there be too many in the world that eschew quiet."

Dame Williams had hitherto been a respectful listener to this dialogue; but the Crowner's last assertion, which she treated as a personality rather than a sally at the sex, roused her latent volubility to action; and, having first retrieved the Crowner from his error, and demonstrated that the deceased woman was not a *felo de se*, she launched into a spirited philippic against mankind, whom she stigmatized as inconstant, treacherous, and intractable.

The Crowner felt that the hitherto unimpeached dignity of his office depended on the turn which the discussion might take, and, in replying to the vituperation of the dame, he cast a look for succour towards Williams; but the latter was too prudent, and, moreover, too much accustomed to his spouse's habits, to interfere. The consequences might have been serious, for the Crowner did not admit that deference to feminine judgment which was uniformly imposed on Williams, and the lady, as the argument proceeded, waxed warmer and more intemperate in her language; but, before these circumstances led to any physical rupture, an auxiliary arrived to the Crowner's aid. The dame had just hurled an impolite invective at the Crowner, and he was about to reply in the same strain, when his clerk and coadjutor returned from his mission. The presence of this subordinate was an incitement which he was unable to resist, and consequently, summoning his resolution to the point of valour, he returned to the attack.

"Why, gammer," he cried, "your own words approve my argument. Go to! you are an arrant scold."

"Go to! you are an arrant scold," echoed the clerk.

"And you—you're a Crowner," vociferated the dame, being, at the moment, at a loss for a grosser epithet.

"Ay, am I," retured the official; "and that I'll soon show you, my mistress. Take note of yon flagons, Sir Clerk, and mark if they hold the two quarts current. Bodikins! I'm a Crowner, am I?"

"A Crowner, am I?" echoed the clerk, seizing three or four of the suspicious flagons.

But Dame Williams had no intention of carrying matters to such an extremity; and, while the clerk was measuring the profundity of the flagons with a rule, she subdued her resentment so far as to remark, with as good-humoured an air as she could assume, that the Crowner had mistaken her sportiveness for passion, and that she was willing to make any apology which he might demand. The Crowner's anger, however, was not appeased, nor his hostility to the illegitimate flagons abated, till the hostess filled one of them with October ale, which, when he had been induced to taste it, completely suffocated his indignation. The clerk, too, was as easily persuaded as his superior, and, after he had regaled himself with a draught from the full vessel, tacitly suffered the dame to remove the empty ones. While this arrangement was in progress, he informed the Crowner, in a low whisper, that he could only muster nine jurors, and that these could hardly be prevailed on to come: but the other was no way embarrassed by this result, which, indeed, he had often experienced in the course of his official career; and, by resolving to act in a double capacity himself, and swearing in Williams and the clerk, to complete the twelve, he obviated any inconvenience that might otherwise have arisen.

Some time elapsed before the jurors assembled; and, when they had all been sworn, the half of them were despatched to convey the corpse into the inquest room. The body had been folded in a shroud of coarse cloth, and deposited in a shell, which, though rude in its construction, was incomparably superior to the boxes in which our modern poor are consigned to their graves.

The presence of the corpse awakened all the better feelings of the Crowner; for, as there were few suicides in those days, and the subjects of inquests were usually the most abject of the poor, he was not often called upon to witness so distressing a spectacle. Such terrible beauty, such lovely pallor, such deadly woe, was a picture which few of the spectators were prepared to meet; and the Crowner, who was, indeed, a good-natured man, made an inward resolution to acquit the deceased of felony, although, as had often occurred where the party was really innocent, it should be proved to his satisfaction that felony had been committed.

"Sirs of the jury," he said, when, after they had viewed the body, they seated themselves mournfully round the table, "and in especial thou, Sir Headborough,"—here the Crowner turned to the parish constable, who was one of the jury, and dropped him a slight nod of recognition,—"who hast, by virtue of thine office, a goodly know-

ledge of the laws, which, in this matter of quest, are awful strict, there is one——”

The Crowner having paused to cough, his clerk iterated, “There is one——”

“But, Sir Crowner,” interrupted the headborough, desirous to display that knowledge of the law for which he had received credit, “where bide the evidences?”

“Call the evidences into court, Whittal!” said the Crowner to his clerk.

“Evidences,” cried the clerk, “I charge you, in the King’s name, to come into court.”

“I’m in court,” said Williams, from the lower end of the table.

“Well, get up, then!” interposed his wife, who was anxious to regain her place in the Crowner’s good graces, “and let the court see you.”

“What knowest thou of the deceased?” demanded the Crowner.

Williams stated the amount of his information, and the Crowner, after a moment’s deliberation, resumed.

“Sirs of the jury, and in especial thou, Sir Headborough, who hast, by virtue of thine office, a goodly knowledge of the laws, which, in this matter of quest, are awful strict, there is one——”

“Fact,” prompted the clerk; and, perceiving that the Crowner’s memory was quite at fault, added, in an under tone, “ye may have noted.”

“Ye may have noted,” continued the Crowner; “and that is, the deceased did not come to her death by drowning.”

The jury, after a few minutes’ consideration, assented.

“Nor did she,” resumed the Crowner, “die by the hands of lawless men; nor within any domicile, tenement, or place of abode; nor——”

“Nor,” echoed the clerk.

“Nor were old or young, male or female, present at her decease, save only Master Peter Williams, the evidences, who swears, by our Lady, and Sancte George, and the Holy Evangelists, that there were no principals, or accessories, or inciters to the deed: and that the deceased died by misadventure, of her own free will, by the mercy of our blessed Lady of Taunton and good Sancte George, to whom be glory! So, sirs of the jury, ye have to say, whether the deceased be worthy of Christen burial, at the cost of the parish, and whether the headborough be charged to see the same performed, having the King’s warrant for his authority.”

The jury, in the newspaper phrase, consulted for a few moments, when they returned their verdict, which the Crowner, as foreman, repeated; and then, notwithstanding that he had previously done so as one of the jury, expressed his conviction of its justice. The verdict, as it was favourable to the deceased, need not be introduced here; but the Crowner’s recommendation, which was appended, is more important. He suggested, with the consent of the jury, that the infant found with the defunct woman, and then under the pro-

tection of Williams, should remain with the latter till the parish had provided for his reception, and that, as there was every reason to believe that such was the name of his father, he should be christened "RICHARD WHITTINGTON."

"And now," said the Crowner to Williams, as, rising from his seat, he seized the innkeeper by the arm, "fill me another flagon of your October, mine host; for, by my troth! this matter has oppressed me sorely."

Williams prepared to furnish the stipulated article; but, before he could effect this purpose, he was accosted by a third person, whose recent arrival, owing to the confusion which the rising of the jury had occasioned, had not yet been observed.

"So ho, Williams!" cried the stranger, "you have a merry meeting here."

"Nay, Master Cobbs," replied Williams, pointing, as he spoke, to the corpse, which, as it had been placed in an angle near the door, had escaped the other's notice; "but a mournful one."

"Ah, poor thing!" said Cobbs, turning towards the corpse—"But, God of Mercy!" he screamed, "it is Gertrude!"

"Who?" shouted a dozen voices.

But the throng shrunk back in silence. Master Cobbs turned round, and as they looked on his blanched cheek and flashing eye, and beheld the majestic dignity of his athletic person, they felt that interference would be both unbecoming and perilous. Even Williams, whom two years of occasional intercourse would have warranted in proceeding, retired as the merchant waved his hand; but it was a sense of the moral rather than physical superiority of Cobbs, an influence for which their uncultivated minds could not account, that restrained them from satisfying their curiosity. A whisper went round as he bent over the humble bier; but when he sobbed, when he threw himself on the corpse, and called her fair, faithful and good, his saviour, and his trusty servant, the auditors felt kindred emotions swelling in their bosoms. Cobbs, however, soon repressed this ebullition of sorrow, and, turning hastily round to Williams, beckoned him out of the room.

"Thou'lt marvel to see me act the woman, good gossip," he said, when, after Williams had followed him a few yards from the house, he turned and confronted him; "but yon fair corse was my foster-sister, and, in a stormy time, my steadfast friend. Prythee, then, as thou lovest God, tell me how this happened."

Williams related, as briefly as he could, the circumstance of his finding the woman, and the particulars which he had elicited during her interval of consciousness. The recital made a visible impression on his auditor, who, as it progressed, betrayed considerable emotion; but, when Williams had finished, he seemed to have recovered his equanimity.

"I'll be at charges for the child," he said, after a moment's silence, "and thou shalt rear him, gaffer. But what time did this hap?"

"The night before our boy was lost," replied Williams, mournfully.

"Our boy! What boy?" cried the merchant.

"Young Henry," returned Williams. "Some baron, or knight, or something of that sort, lodged with us the other night, and the dame was foolish enough to tell him the child's history; and the next morning, soon after he departed, we missed the child."

The merchant was silent for a few moments; but it was evident, from his external emotion, that his silence was not owing to indifference. His pale face suddenly became florid, and his eyes were lit with unnatural radiancy. His arched eyebrows compressed into a scowl, his lips parted involuntarily, and his teeth grated with passion.

"Wouldst do me a service, Williams?" he asked, impatiently.

"Think it done," cried Williams.

"Then take thou this ring," said Cobbs, drawing a ring from one of his fingers, "and speed with it to Sir Herbert de Pye, at Taunton Castle. Say, the owner sent thee with it, and then relate thy tale."

Williams stared doubtfully in the face of the merchant, for, willingly as he had always submitted to the superiority which the other invariably assumed, this was an errand which seemed so preposterous, so utterly at variance with the station of Cobbs, that he was unable to reconcile it with reason. A moment's reflection, however, convinced him, that, as he had never been competent to penetrate the mystery which hung over Cobbs, it would be useless to attempt it now, and therefore, without making any remark, he hastened to discharge his extraordinary mission.

Two horses were soon made ready; and Williams and Cobbs, having mounted them, galloped off in opposite directions.

The sun was looking as cheerful as he could look on a February morning—and perhaps, in such a season, his faint beams appear more beautiful than the solstice in summer—as Cobbs pursued his fleet career along the road to Arkton Castle. The snow, which still covered the ground, was dissolving rapidly beneath the influence of the sun, and the way, consequently, was little adapted to expeditious travelling; but neither horse nor rider relaxed their exertions, but continued the furious gallop with which they had started. As he emerged from the extensive valley whence Taunton-Deans derived its name, and entered on the open country called Sedgemoor, the road became more heavy and impassable; and while he was endeavouring to impel his horse to increased celerity, the animal lost its footing, and precipitated him to the ground.

The merchant had been so abstracted throughout his previous progress, that he did not note the wayfarers whom he passed, or those who were approaching from the opposite quarter; and he was therefore confounded with surprise, when, as he regained his feet unhurt, he was saluted by a little boy, who, it seemed, was struggling to free himself from the custody of his companion, a slender but muscular man.

"It's farder Cobbs! it's farder Cobbs!" cried the child, springing from the arms of his detainer, and bounding towards the merchant.

"My child! my child!" exclaimed Cobbs, as he caught the little fellow in his arms.

As the merchant embraced the child he glanced at the sole spectator of his tenderness. This person stood motionless with surprise, and looked as if he were rivetted to the ground. He was dressed in a loose suit, made with more deference to decency than fashion, and composed of cloths of a dark and uniform colour. His complexion was rather pale, and contrasted strongly with the deep cerulean colour of his large eyes. His amazement, whatever occasioned it, deprived him for the moment of speech; and, as the merchant looked at him steadfastly, the feeling became reciprocal. At length, taking off his black-plumed cap, the stranger threw himself on his left knee, and seized the merchant's hand; but, before he could pay the homage which he designed, the latter cast himself on his neck, and embraced him as a brother.

"I thought you dead, Hubert," cried the merchant (for so we will continue to designate the incognito), as he assisted the stranger to rise.

"I mourned you also, my lord," replied Hubert.

"Thou mightst well mourn," said the merchant, sorrowfully, as he took up the child in his arms; "but now," he continued, in a more cheerful tone, "we may retrace our steps, and thou canst tell thy tale as we go on."

Hubert took the horse by the rein, and, walking along by the side of the merchant, began, after a moment's silence, the following narrative.

"That you know this child for your own, my lord, I am now aware, though I cannot guess how you learned the circumstance; for, as you know, when you went with the Black Prince to France, your lady had not yet borne him. Your father, as I advised you by letter, died soon after your departure; and then your poor lady, left at the mercy of your brother, began her course of suffering. It was not, however, till the rumour of your death, confirmed by the royal report, reached the castle, that your brother began to worry her with his guilty love, which he then pressed upon her unceasingly. He told me—for he knew not that our disagreement was made up before your departure—that it was gross injustice, when he should have succeeded to the inheritance of his father, that your unborn child should step before him; and he made me swear, that, if he did not succeed in winning your lady, I would murder her offspring directly it was born—"

"All this I know, good Hubert," interrupted the merchant: "but wish to hear how you escaped death yourself, for dead I supposed you were."

"When I had placed the child with my sister, and she had carried him to the hostelry where he was reared, I used frequently to ride

over for the purpose of seeing him ; but no one knew of my motive, nor did the people at the hostel suspect it. I could see, indeed, that your brother began to watch me ; not that he suspected me of having spared the child, but because he feared I would betray his secret. But I thought, by riding several times to Taunton, and suffering him to keep me in sight the whole way, he would be satisfied ; and this I did, till one night, as I was fording the River Tone on my return, he met me in the mid-stream, and, springing on me suddenly, left me for dead in the water."

" The black-hearted fiend ! " exclaimed Cobbs.

" A party of soldiers, who were on their way to the coast, passed the ford a few minutes afterwards, and found me nearly suffocated. I was unable, being insensible, to tell them how it happened ; and when I recovered I told a fictitious story, for I had no wish to shame my master's house. They believed me, however ; and, as I found they were under orders for France, a thought struck me that I would go with them, and learn if you were really dead. My horse, I have since heard, was seen at the castle-gate covered with gore ; and hence, I suppose, rose the report of my death."

" But you went to France ? " said the merchant.

" I did, my lord, and without seeing my sister, or informing her of my escape. I heard, on my arrival in France, that you had been slain in battle ; and after serving three years, and learning little else but the art of minstrelsy, I returned home. I stained my face with a dye I brought from Paris, and, having further disguised myself with a false beard, I visited the castle as a minstrel, and entered the service of your brother. When I was established there, I began to search for my sister ; but of her I could learn no tidings, except that she had married a soldier, and gone with him to another part of the country. As I was afraid of being discovered on this business, I used to don my old apparel, the same as I now wear ; but, as I went out of the castle by the secret outlet, which, you will recollect, was known only to you and myself, no one was likely to observe me. But one night, as I entered the turret on my return, I was encountered by one of the old servants, who, seeing me appear he knew not how, and recognizing the fashion of my habits, took me for a ghost, and raised a general alarm."

" Your identity was not suspected, then ? " interposed the merchant.

" No, my lord. When your brother desired me to steal the child, on his recognizing him at the hostel, I consented, and promised—but this I must not divulge, for I am sworn to secrecy. I may say, however, that, with the assistance of one of his retainers, whom I trusted because he was a stranger, and because, too, I had heard him say he disliked his service, I rescued the child from peril, and now resign him to you."

" What is the name of him you trusted, Hubert ? "

" Whittington," replied Hubert ; " but you know him not."

" Your story is strange, Hubert," said the merchant, not heeding

the last observation of his companion ; “ but it is not so marvellous as mine. When I received your account of my father’s death—for my brother never advertised me of it—I sought the King’s license to come home ; but Dame Alice Perrers, his mistress, who owed me enmity, beguiled him to refuse it. Knowing my brother for a fiend incarnate, and dreading his usage of my sweet wife, I resolved, in a luckless hour, to come home privily ; and, with this intent, deserted the field for the port of Lyons. Thence I escaped in disguise on ship-board, but was captured by a corsair, and sold a slave at Algiers. I performed a service for the Paynim King, who was my master, and on hearing such part of my tale as I thought fit to unfold, and having parole from me to send him my ransom if I reached England, he gave me my liberty. When I arrived here, I sought your sister——”

“ Oh, my lord ! ” said Hubert, abruptly interrupting the merchant, “ dost know aught of her ? ”

“ Alas, Hubert ! ” replied the merchant, “ she is dead.”

“ Dead ! ” echoed Hubert, transfixed with grief and surprise.

“ Alas ! ” sighed the merchant, who was equally affected with his companion ; but, mastering his emotion, he resumed—“ I will tell thee of her fate, Hubert, when thou art better prepared to hear it ; and now I will speak of my own mishaps. From her I learned the tidings thou hast told me to-day, save that she thought thee dead. In the disguise which I now wear, I saw my motherless boy ; and, for his sake, I resolved to live. I went then to Herbert de Pye, the old chevalier of Taunton—for you will recollect, Hubert, that he had ever a father’s love for me—and, by his advice, passed off for the merchant that I seemed, because, till the King shall be appeased, my life is forfeit. He sent me to one Fitzwarren, a merchant of London, who lent me money to redeem my parole with the Moor ; and, as Herbert de Pye swore to look to my child, though he thought him safer at the hostel than his castle, and as my stay in England was full of peril, I took the money to the Moor myself. Our bark was called the Unicorn ; and, as we had a fair passage, I had an opportunity of acquiring the mariner’s craft. Our captain died at Algiers, and I brought home the bark, which I still command.”

“ Alas, my lord ! ” observed Hubert, mournfully, “ how can you thus demean yourself ? ”

“ ’Tis stern necessity, Hubert, and the will of the Supreme.”

“ And yet, I ween, your arm can still wield a lance.”

“ Ah ! you guess at the Unknown Knight of the tournament, then ? Yes, Hubert ! When my false brother there—but it matters not ; though, would to God that the tie of blood, which he has disdained, could have been undone that hour ! I thought to have despised it now ; but Heaven has interposed, and my child is saved.”

“ You would not have been so rash, my lord ? ”

“ Not singly, Hubert,” replied the merchant. “ I have sent a message to Baron Herbert, and it would quickly bring him before Arkton Castle. But now we will intercept him, and I will place my boy in his charge, and thou too, if it so please thee.”

"That it will, right well, my lord," rejoined Hubert; "and yonder, if I mistake not, comes the Baron, and a force with him."

Hubert was not mistaken. A party of horsemen, arranged in military order, were descried galloping at full speed towards the spot where they stood; and, though their standard was at too great a distance to be accurately marked by the eye, the merchant had no doubt that they were the forces of the Baron of Taunton. He placed the child, who had fallen asleep, in the arms of Hubert, and, mounting his horse, moved gently onwards. The approaching allies, however, soon came up with him; and, halting in the middle of the road, he lifted his hat, and addressed the foremost of the party. This person was, as his dress manifested, the leader of the others; and the bear rampant which was graven on his shield, as well as the motto, "*Detinco, nec sperno*," denoted the Baron of Taunton.

He was scarcely above the middle height, but the erect posture which, notwithstanding that he was advanced in years, he uniformly maintained, gave him the appearance of greater procerity. His features were rather harshly turned, but the gravity of his brow, and the stern majesty of his eye, were softened by the venerable expression with which the combination of his features seemed to be impressed. He wore buskins, or half-boots, turned up with buff, and ornamented at the instep with a gold tassel. His hose were of a dark brown colour, and fitted tight till they reached the knee, where his white *hanselines*, or trousers, though they were not made so close as his hose, were fitted with nearly equal nicety to his thighs. His surcoat was of a fine cream-coloured cloth, embroidered, from the shoulders to a point in the centre of the waist, with gold lace, and was cut to fall closely over the hips, which marked the proportion of his form. It was cut off in lappets at the shoulder, whence the sleeves of his jerkin, or under-jacket, displayed the same colour as his hose. A gold chain, which also served him for a girdle, was thrown round his neck, and, after clasping behind, was twisted round his waist, where it held a long and straight sword, whose hilt was adorned with precious stones. His hat was bell-shaped, and had little or no brim; but a plume of white feathers, which were fixed in front, and fastened to the hat by a large ruby, gave it the martial appearance which its deficiency of peak would otherwise have destroyed.

His retinue consisted of about twenty archers, and between twenty and thirty men-at-arms, all well mounted and equipped. The archers were clad in a tight dress of green; and, besides their long bows, were armed with cut-and-thrust swords, which were then in general use. The men-at-arms wore caps of iron, and short steel hauberks, which latter, fragile as they seemed, would offer a steady check to an antagonist's lance. They carried lances which, having an axe attached below the barb, answered the purpose both of lance and halberd; and, besides these weapons, which were of a prodigious length, they wore the cut-and-thrust sword.

Sir Herbert acknowledged the respectful salute of the merchant with a slight and haughty nod, which was evidently intended to blind the spectators; for when he advanced close to his ear, and was

beyond the hearing of his followers, his language descended to that of an equal.

"I have obeyed thy call, Sinclair," he said; "and I thought to have defied the traitor in the midst of his vassals."

"I thank thee, my lord," replied the merchant; "but yon trusty servant, whom I must now turn over to thee, has saved the child by stratagem; and so we will bide a more fitting season. But, good my lord, take thou my boy under thy wing, and rear him as thou wouldst thine own."

"That will I, my Sinclair," rejoined the Baron; "and he will be a bold man that assails him henceforward, I warrant thee."

"Then I will get me gone," said the merchant, as he repeated the bow which he had enacted on the first appearance of Sir Herbert.

As the merchant turned his horse's head to retire, Sir Herbert directed one of his vassals, who had charge of a led horse in the rear, to resign the animal to Hubert, who, clasping the sleeping child to his breast, sprung into the saddle, and took up a place in Sir Herbert's train. The latter nodded once more to the merchant, who had not yet moved away, and, urging his steed into a gentle trot, gave the signal for his company to return homewards.

CHAPTER VI. THE MEETING.

WHICH CLOSES THE FIRST PERIOD OF THIS HISTORY.

THE merchant remained stationary for some minutes after the departure of the baronial cavalcade, the progress of which he watched with intense interest. When it had gone so far that he could no longer distinguish its several members, he turned the head of his horse towards the opposite quarter, and proceeded forwards at as smart a pace as the road would permit. In about two hours he drew up before the gate of Arkton Castle; and, having first drawn the collar of his coat over his face, and pulled his hat down on his eyebrows, he dismounted, and hailed the warder.

"May one Whittington, a soldier of yours, be spoken with to-day?" he asked.

"Ay," replied the warder; "have you aught with him?"

"I have, good warder," returned the merchant; "and I would give a fair guerdon to be helped to his presence."

"That shall you be straight," cried the warder; and, throwing open the postern, he admitted the merchant into the ballium.

"Leave your horse to my charge, fair sir," he continued, taking the rein from the hand of Cobbs, "and bend your steps toward yonder postern. That will admit you to the castle-ward, where, I ween, you will find him you seek."

"I thank you, Sir Warder," returned the merchant; and walked forwards to the specified locality.

But Whittington was not in the ward; and the merchant was directed to the southern bastion, to which he ascended by a moveable stair. He paused when near the summit, for, in the rude measure which the sentinel was warbling overhead, he thought that, though the ideas were not strange to the age, he detected the expression of the singer's feelings. He stood, then, and listened to the following strain:

Woman's vow and woman's word
 Were never loyal to her lord;
 Like the blush of damsels shy,
 They show the wish they'd fain deny;
 Never to the heart disclosed,
 The vow is throned and then deposed;
 And like the snow when the sun is nigh,
 It melts beneath the first bright eye.

Woman's heart and woman's face
 Are opposite as sin and grace ;
 Woman's tongue and woman's eye
 Do each the other's words belie ;
 Woman's soul and woman's ear
 Were never proof to flatterer ;
 Nor did ever woman's lip
 Refuse of proffered vice to sip.

The sentinel ceased ; and the merchant, renewing his ascension, strode on to the bastion. The soldier who had given utterance to the song, and whom he now confronted, was neither tall nor diminutive in stature ; but his brawny and well-knit limbs, which the closeness of his dress exhibited to the most cursory observer, denoted considerable physical power. His brow wore an expression of doubt and anxiety ; but neither this appearance nor the length of his black beard, which evinced a degree of negligence altogether unaccountable, detracted from the frankness of his handsome countenance. He was clad, like all the cavaliers or partisans of the period, in a closely-fitted suit of buff ; and wore, in addition to the hauberk and heavy steel gauntlets, the *giambeux*, or armour for the thighs. His right hand grasped a pole-axe, the helve of which was nearly ten feet long, and which, as it required both hands to wield it, was a sufficient proof of his great strength. Having heard the merchant's step ascending, he turned round from the parapet, over which he had been listlessly leaning ; but he had not time to utter the challenge, which, such was the discipline maintained in baronial castles, all persons approaching were to answer with the pass-word, before the merchant became visible.

"Ah!—Traitor!" cried the soldier, as he recognised the person of his visitor, "what evil errand brought you hither?"

"A more evil errand than you think for," replied the merchant haughtily ; "and were it not that you have done me good service lately, though you knew it not, you should have the weight of my arm rather than my tidings."

"Peace, roystering braggart!" returned Whittington ; "you are too contemptible to be worthy of a brave man's vengeance, and too pitiful to awaken his ire. Tell your business ; and then, as you value life, begone."

"Tis well, my master," rejoined the merchant ; "but I can brook ill-words from a wrathful man. Moreover, I am obliged, though contrary to my will, to wound you with my tongue.—Your wife is dead."

"Dead!" echoed Whittington, dropping the pole-axe from his grasp : "dead! said you? Then may God and our Lady of Taunton assail her!"

"Amen!" ejaculated the merchant.

"Away, exulting villain!" shouted Whittington, seizing his pole-axe, and darting towards the merchant ; "away! or I will be provoked to spill your blood."

The merchant, however, did not flinch; but, folding his arms over his breast, and drawing up his figure to its full height, awaited the assault.

"Strike!" he cried, as his antagonist rushed forwards.

But Whittington suddenly paused. It is not the nature of the brave to attack the defenceless; and the merchant had not mistaken the disposition of Whittington, or miscalculated the effect of his own fortitude, when he threw himself into this unresisting though inflexible posture. His antagonist dropped his uplifted weapon, and seized on him at first in doubt, and then with admiration.

"Hounds," he cried at last, "have courage; but courage is not a virtue."

"And what have I done, my master," replied the merchant, "to merit your displeasure?"

"What have you done! Zounds! my own eyes beheld you fondling. She was kneeling at your feet, weeping and—and"

"Kissing my hand," added the merchant, stoutly.

"Ah!—Say you? You confess it to my face?" vociferated the enraged soldier. "And what else, prythee?"

"Paying me homage as her feudal lord," replied the other.

There was something in the tone in which the speaker delivered these words, which were of themselves extraordinary enough, that struck the soldier with involuntary awe. It immediately occurred to him, too, that from his first introduction to his deceased wife, she had uniformly conducted herself towards the merchant with the most respectful humility, and many of her actions, which he had been wont to impute to other motives, he now attributed to the observance of the feudal discipline. The effect of the merchant's revelation was consequently instantaneous; and the soldier, mentally acquitting his wife of infidelity, suffered him to renew his explanation.

"And yet, though I am her foster-brother, I freely forgive you, for the man whom you assisted this morning was her near relation, and the child you saved was noble. For this service, though you parted from her in anger—nay, suspecting her faith—you shall have my esteem. But hear her fate; and then seek, by rigid penance, to atone for your injustice! She followed you to the Taunton tournament, in the hope of pacifying you by revealing his name; and, on her way thither, was seized with the pains of child-birth. She gave birth to a boy, whom I will see cared for, and died with your name upon her lips. Who, since you prized not the love of such a wife, can teach you the duties of a parent? None; and therefore, Sir Whittington, you shall never see your child."

"Never see my child!" cried Whittington, "and who art thou that would prevent me?"

"I," replied the other, "I am Henry Sinclair, Knight, Baron of Arkton, and Lord of Seymour."

"Ah!" muttered a third voice.

"Who spoke?" cried the merchant and Whittington together.

The merchant rushed to the parapet, and cast a hasty look

around ; but no one, not even a shadow, was visible. He then ran to the stair by which he had ascended to the bastion, and surveyed the entire ballium at a glance ; but here he was equally unsuccessful. Had he been a moment sooner, however, he would have detected the figure of his brother, who, when he heard the disclosure which had elicited his exclamation, stole softly down the stair, and concealed himself behind an adjacent buttress.

" 'Twas a vain fancy then," said the merchant ; " and yet I could have sworn that I heard a voice."

" Ay, my lord," rejoined Whittington, whose demeanour had undergone a change since the disclosure of his visiter's rank ; " but haply the moaning of the wind deceived us."

" It must have been so," said the merchant, after a considerable pause. " But farewell, Whittington ! When my son succeeds to the heritage of his fathers, your son shall be presented to you. But ho !" he continued, as the tramp of armed men ascending to the bastion became audible, " treachery ! Give me your axe, Sir Whittington !"

" Nay," cried Whittington, springing on him suddenly, " you are my prisoner."

The shock was so unexpected that the merchant lost his footing, and fell beneath the resistless weight of his antagonist.

Sir Alfred Sinclair, at the head of a dozen partisans, attained the bastion at this moment, and hastened to the assistance of Whittington, who, with his pole-axe raised in the air, and his foot on the chest of the prostrate merchant, stood in a situation which the Baron had not anticipated.

" Thanks, brave Whittington !" cried the Baron, when he perceived that person's hostility to his brother ; " you shall be well rewarded for this."

" Traitor !" scowled the merchant.

" An' you speak another word," said Whittington, " I will cleave your skull in twain."

" Keep this promise, Whittington !" cried the Baron vehemently. " And you, villains," he shouted to his vassals, " bear the prisoner to safe ward !"

Accordingly, the prisoner was immediately seized by the soldiers, and transported to the ward-room. Thence, by the direction of Whittington, (for the Baron had remained on the bastion,) he was borne down a passage from which branched numerous cells, in one of which, after his limbs had been bound with cords, he was left alone.

The cell was about eight feet square, and lighted by a small window, which, as he lay in an angle on the same side, the merchant was unable to examine. This purpose, indeed, did not strike him at the moment ; for as he was now entirely in the hands of his brother, who, he knew, would shrink from the perpetration of no outrage, however inhuman, his mind was for some hours distracted. Even the treachery of Whittington, from whom he had expected assistance

rather than enmity, was at first forgotten; and when it did occur to him, he was utterly unable to account for it. It would be superfluous to transcribe the whole of his ruminations, which—for the matter was of too dangerous a character to suffer interruption—employed him till the night was far spent; but as he had received no supply of food during the day, and as he thought this circumstance augured a nocturnal visit from his brother, he began at length to consider the practicability of an escape.

Though tightly bound with cords, he was able to introduce one of his hands into the pocket of his doublet, which, fortunately, had not been searched by his captors, and extract thence a large clasp-knife, which served him to sever his bonds. Being so far free from personal restraint, he groped round the room in quest of a weapon; but in this, as he expected, he was unsuccessful. His attention was next directed to the window; but as it was situated at the outer face of the wall, which gradually expanded from the orifice till it formed a wide mouth in the side of the cell, and as, moreover, the night was extremely dark, he was unable to discover its character. He was consequently enforced to clamber up the wall, and then to creep along the embrasure in which the window was set, where he examined it with his hands. It was sufficiently wide to form an outlet for his person; but it was secured with iron bars, which, though they promised to yield to a moderate degree of pressure, withstood the little force which his exhausted frame could oppose to them. He persevered, however; and his exertions would probably have been crowned with success; but, at the moment that he expected to force one of the bars, the door of his cell was thrown open.

The person who now intruded into his presence was one whom the merchant least expected; and, as he carried a lighted lamp in his hand, his features were distinctly visible: it was Whittington.

"So ho, my lord!" he said, in a low voice, "you are already on the wing. You cannot think my ill usage this morning was earnest. By my soul! I feigned it to blind your brother; and, thanks to our Lady! I blinded him effectually. He appointed me to meet him on the bastion at midnight; but if you will trust to my guidance, which you can now have no reason to doubt, we will be beyond his reach by that time."

"God reward you as you deal by me!" replied the merchant; and, creeping to the side of the embrasure, he sprung to the floor.

Whittington led the way into a vaulted passage, where he extinguished his lamp; and, bidding his companion follow, hastened onwards. They passed through a low postern into the ballium, whence, gliding along by the side of the wall, they repaired to the bastion.

A heavy and hasty step, which was fast approaching, impelled them to increased activity. Whittington put a rope into the hands of the merchant, and grasped another himself. These had previously been fastened to strong hooks, which had been driven firmly in the parapet; and though Whittington said that he had not tested their

length, they seemed adequate to the projected descension. The confederates threw them over the wall, and immediately began their descent; but the merchant's rope did not reach to the moat, and he was obliged to drop when a dozen feet above the water, with which element, as has been before observed, the moat was filled. The noise of his fall, however, did not attract unfriendly observation; and, after swimming across the moat, he landed on the open castellany. Here he encountered Whittington, who offered to guide him to a place of entertainment; and here, for the present, this history will leave them both.

THE SECOND PERIOD. YOUTH.

CHAPTER I. THE DEPARTURE.

SHOWING THE MANNER AND CIRCUMSTANCE OF DICK'S DEPARTURE FOR LONDON.

UPWARDS of thirteen years after the date of the first period of this history, or, to speak with greater accuracy, towards the close of April, 1377, the hostelry of the St. George and the Dragon, which had for so many years afforded refreshment to the wayfarer, presented a forlorn and ruinous aspect. The event which produced this change in its economy, and the reason that it remained untenable and untenanted, constitute but a brief and uninteresting relation.

One dark midnight, about three weeks previous, the inhabitants of the adjacent hamlet were wakened from their slumbers by loud cries of distress, and, as such a circumstance was at least unusual, the most resolute among them rose to enquire its meaning. They soon found that the cries emanated from the hostelry, which, in the lower story, was involved in flames. A goodly concourse, consisting entirely of neighbours, immediately collected in front of the edifice, and though, owing to the prevalence of a high wind, they did not succeed in their efforts to arrest the flames, they rescued two of the occupants from imminent peril. One of these persons was Dame Williams, the wife of the proprietor; and the other was a lad, apparently in his fourteenth year, who bore the name of Dick Whittington. The proprietor himself was nowhere to be found, and as, on the extinction of the flames, the ruins were carefully searched, and no traces of him discovered, it was generally believed that he had perished. There were a few, indeed, who were sceptical on this point, for as he had been tipsy the night before, and the fire was said to have arisen through his carelessness, they thought that, rather than encounter the wrath of his spouse, he had fled the country.

Aware that she was unpopular where her disposition was known, and being forsaken by the few local friends who had adhered to her in prosperity, Dame Williams did not remain in Taunton-Deans beyond the third day after the fire. She availed herself of a chance afforded by a waggon, which passed through the hamlet on that day, to depart for the metropolis, where, it was reported, she was on friendly terms with a merchant, named Cobbs, who had once visited Taunton-Deans occasionally, but had not been seen there for nearly

three years. The lad, Dick Whittington, continued in the hamlet; but though he accepted gratuities of food from the neighbours, by some of whom he was employed to execute errands and chop wood, he did not seek the shelter of any of their cottages. He took up his abode in the ruins of the hostelry, where, it was supposed, he would remain, till the approaching season of hay-making invited him to the field. On the morning of the 28th of April, however, he appeared abroad at an earlier hour than usual; but though he was observed, by such of the villagers as were then about, to station himself in front of the hostelry, his purpose in rising was not suspected.

He was leaning against the side of the dilapidated house, and, apparently, was lost in thought. His oval-shaped face, marked with the prepossessing lines of ingenuousness and candour, wore an expression of gravity and reflection, profound beyond his years. His hair was of a dark brown colour, and cropped close, which circumstance was favourable to the revelation of his expansive forehead, whose surface was already impressed with those organs which phrenologists prize. His eyebrows were slight, but arcuate; and his dark eyes, in their pensive mood, indicated that decision of character which it is so desirable to possess. He was clad in a suit of russet, which, made to fit him tightly, displayed the contour of his slight and rather tall person. His hood was black, and adorned with a leaden figure of the virgin; and on his breast, fastened to a cord which dangled from his neck, he wore a piece of soiled paper, which Romans, it is said, call an *Agnus Dei*.

His meditation, whatever was its subject, was soon at an end; and, sitting down on the step of the door, he sung, to a pleasing air, this irregular verse:

Oh, sweet and dear,
 And aye sincere,
 Is love that glistens in a tear;
 And such is mother's love, I ween,
 And such the love of village green—
 Round England's kingdom you may roam,
 And find no love like that of home.
 But, oh, say where, when orphans seek,
 On village green or mountain bleak,
 Round England's kingdom, France, or Spain,
 Or on the blue and trackless main,
 Or any place beneath the sky,
 Oh, where shall love delight the eye?
 Yet orphan's breast
 Can manifest
 As much of feeling as the best;
 And well he wots the soothful lay,
 Though native scenes he quit for aye—
 Round England's kingdom he may roam,
 And find no love like that of home.

"Well done, my young master!" said a short, close-set man, who, unperceived by Dick, had approached while he was singing; "Well done, my young master! mayhap you can sing another stave?"

"Ay, your worship; if it so please you," replied Dick.

"You are a proper lad, I wis," rejoined the stranger; "but I wished only to approve your manners. And now, haply, you can tell me how this hostel, which has braved fortune for so many years, has fallen under calamity at last."

"I can, fair sir," said Dick; and, in a mournful tone, he related the particulars as they have been stated.

"And what," asked the stranger, "has become of the occupants?"

"Master Williams," observed Dick, his face becoming florid with grief which he was ashamed to effuse, "Master Williams can't be found; and the Dame has gone to London, to seek one Master Cobbs, a captain on ship-board. The people were not good to her hereabouts; and, as she has been ruined by the fire, she intends to seek service."

"But there was a boy," rejoined the other, "one Richard Whittington. What has become of him?"

"He is here, Sir Stranger," said Dick; "I am Dick Whittington."

"Indeed!" returned the stranger, "Well, what do you intend to do, Dick?"

"I am going to London this morning," replied Dick, "to seek my fortune. They say that you can pick up gold in the streets there."

"A metaphor, a parable, good Dick," cried the stranger, checking an inclination to laugh. "But how will you travel all the way to London?"

"I have hoarded ample provision, fair sir," said Dick, drawing a coarse gabardine, in which some bread and meat were tied up, from behind the wall! "and I hope to have a lift in the waggon, which, as you may know, will pass here directly."

"I am going in the waggon, too," observed the other, after a pause. "Be a good boy, Dick, and you shall be my camerade. You can call me Master Simon. Simon Racket is my name, though some few, my particulars, call me Rackety Simon."

The speaker delivered this speech with such emphasis, and, as he ceased speaking, assumed so patronising an aspect, that Dick ventured to scrutinize him more strictly than he had previously done. He seemed to be bordering on his thirtieth year, and, as has been stated, was short in stature; but his person was robust, and his limbs well ordered. His countenance was plain, but round and open. He wore party-coloured hose, crackowes shoes, which latter were fastened to the knee by showy gilt chains, and a frock of Flemish cloth, secured by a girdle of figured silk. His hood was half blue and half green, and, over his left ear, was set off with an artificial rose. His appearance did not bespeak the rustic, and Dick, who at once detected this, set him down for a burghess of London.

“ Here, I think, comes the waggon,” cried Dick, bounding into the centre of the road. “ There’s music in those bells,” he added half-aloud, as the ponderous carriage, drawn by eight stout horses, each of which bore two small bells over his head, slowly approached them.

Master Simon would probably have spoken to the driver of the waggon to procure Dick a free passage, or, in the event of this being refused, would have paid his fare; but, as the vehicle passed the defunct hostelry, Dick himself accosted the waggoner. Perhaps the latter had been in the habit of halting at Taunton-Deans, for he immediately recognised Dick; and, in answer to his solicitation of a passage to London, bade him jump up. Master Simon soon agreed about his own fare; and, having assisted Dick into the carriage, he dexterously introduced himself. The waggon, in order to facilitate their ascent, had been brought to a halt; but, before Dick and his companion could seat themselves securely, it renewed its progress.

CHAPTER II. THE JOURNEY.

TRACES THE HERO'S PROGRESS TOWARDS LONDON—OLD MAY-DAY—THE MAYINGS—THE MAID MARIAN—ROBIN HOOD—FRIAR TUCK—COMBAT BETWEEN MASTER SIMON RACKET AND ROBIN HOOD—DICK DISPLAYS DECISION OF CHARACTER—ELEANOR PRICE AND DAME ALICE PERRERS—HIGHGATE—BILL SMITH—SIR AMBROSE POLLARD, THE PRIEST OF HIGHGATE—BATTLE BETWEEN THE ROMANISTS AND LOLLARDS, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES TO DICK.

A JOURNEY across England, towards the close of the fourteenth century, was an undertaking which occupied a considerable time; for though, at the commencement of his reign, a system of posts had been established by Edward the Third, it is doubtful whether, in after years, he continued to maintain them. It is certain, that for a succeeding century, the roads were in a wretched condition; and, notwithstanding that it is recorded, that nearly forty years previous, an express had passed between Edinburgh and London in six days, there is every reason to believe that even when the beasts of burden were of a superior class, expeditious travelling was almost unknown. The waggon in which Master Simon Racket and his camarade travelled, and which was then the ordinary machine of conveyance for the respectable sort of passengers, was so slow in its advances, that, though the weather was exceedingly fine, two days had expired before they reached the village of Torrington, where, in consequence of an accident which befell the axle, it was halted for the night.

As their arrival was unexpected, and the festival of the morrow had brought in a flood of guests, the occupants of the waggon were unable to procure lodgings at the village hostel; and Master Simon, therefore, was fain to make the most of a litter of straw, on which, having covered himself over with his cloak, he stretched himself in the waggon. Dick Whittington, having first said his orisons to the leaden image which he wore in his hood, disposed himself to rest in a similar manner. Probably, however, if his ability had been equal to his will, he would have been better satisfied to have continued awake; for, in that age, the eve of the 1st of May was a night of general festivity. But as, in consequence of his preferring ambulation to the irksome jolting of the waggon, he had been on his feet the entire day, he was weary enough to be indifferent to active pleasure. He hoped, too, as the vehicle would have to undergo repair in the morning, that he would then have an opportunity of witnessing the ceremonies which ushered in May, and in which, for several years anterior, he had been wont to enact a prominent part. In this mood he fell asleep, and slept soundly till, at the dawn of the following day, he was awakened by a loud noise, which was occasioned by the artisans repairing the waggon.

Dick, on getting up, found that Master Simon was already awake; and, as they had both agreed to do on the previous evening, they



*Dick Whittington enjoying the Sports of
Old Maye dave.*

started together for the village green. Long before they reached this place, which was situated at the other end of the village, they heard the pæan of May carolled by a hundred voices ; and, on entering the area, they immediately joined in the chorus.

In the centre of the green, at about a stone's throw distance from the road, stood a tall pole, which, crowned with a bough of ripe hawthorn, and bound round with garlands of the richest colours, Dick at once recognised the May-Pole. It was surrounded by a circle of rustics, each of whom was adorned with fragrant garlands, and armed with a branch of hawthorn, which was flourished in the air during the dance. There were some, standing a little distance beyond the ring, who played with all their might on rude instruments of music, chiefly horns and pipes ; and the whole, as they danced, sung the May-day song, which Brand, in his Popular Antiquities, gives as follows :

“ Trip and goe,
Heave and hoe,
Up and downe,
To and froe ;
From the towne,
To the grove,
Two and two,
Let us rove ;
A Maying, a playing ;
Love hath no gainsaying :
So merrily trip and goe.”

The most interesting of the dancers was Maid Marian, the Queen of May, who was a pretty, modest-looking girl, in appearance about nineteen years of age. She immediately recognised Master Simon as an old acquaintance, and, to the visible vexation of the representative of that personage, preferred him to the long-established claims of Robin Hood. There was Friar Tuck, too, with his comrade Little John ; and last, not least, the Fool and his Hobby-horse ; all of whom enacted their parts with consummate skill, which the musicians applauded by repeatedly arresting their music to laugh.

Dick Whittington, though he joined in the dance and song, kept close to the side of Master Simon, whose attentions to the May-Queen were watched with a jealous eye by Robin Hood. Master Simon, however, seemed to be unconscious of this *surveillance*, and, to the mortification of his rival, continued to engross the ear and discourse of his fair acquaintance. At length he led her out to the dance, and this, as it was an act contrary to all precedent, and one, moreover, which completely supplanted Robin Hood in his office, the latter person resented in a summary way. He struck Master Simon a blow on the side of the head, and, before he could return it, seized him by the collar of his frock. The disturbance which ensued was general ; but Master Simon, though somewhat enraged, was no way daunted.

“ Loose your hold, dastard !” he cried to his adversary, “ and we'll try the combat on equal vantage.”

"Give the gallant fair play, Sir Robin," shouted several voices.

But Robin Hood did not seem inclined to relinquish the advantage which his sudden assault had secured to him. The struggle, consequently, would soon have been decided in his favour, though Master Simon, perhaps, was the strongest man of the two; but, just in the crisis of the contest, Dick Whittington entangled his right leg with that of Robin, and the trio fell to the ground amidst a general laugh.

Robin Hood, on regaining his feet, was too crest-fallen to renew the combat, notwithstanding that his antagonist, conscious of his superiority, endeavoured to provoke him by sundry abusive expressions. Dick was not sorry to see the duel so easily settled, for, though he entertained no doubt of his friend's valour, he thought that the May-Queen would be better pleased with this arrangement. On looking round, however, he found that the fair damsel had disappeared; and as the waggon was now in sight, and the Mayings had no longer any fascination for either of them, he easily prevailed on Master Simon to quit the scene of action.

They soon overtook the waggon, and, having saluted the driver, walked together in the rear.

"By holydome, Sir Dickon!" said Master Simon, after a moment's silence, "you have done me good service this morning. I would not, for the sum of a priest's robberies, be worsted by you cock-sparrow."

Dick was silent, for the remark of his companion, he thought, bordered on blasphemy.

"Marry," continued Master Simon, looking in his countenance, "you like not the hint about the priests. Never mind, my poor camarade, I love you too well to offend you; but by-and-by, when you know more of these things, you will look on crafty priests with as much hatred as I do."

"No more of this, fair sir," said Dick, "for Master Williams, whom I suppose you knew, taught me to reverence the holy fathers."

"Ay, ay," replied Master Simon, in an energetic and serious tone, "that is the grand secret of their existence—to sow the seeds of their creed in infant minds. But, to quit the subject, what think you of my bonny May-Queen, Dick?"

"She is a goodly maiden, and a fair, Master Simon," rejoined Dick, "and has a bearing above the common of country damsels."

"By St. George, good Dickon!" returned the other, "I marvel at your power of discrimination. She is a paragon, and, as you observe, has more polished manners than belong to country maidens. True, she has lived two years with a lady of the court, but she derives her grace and polish from nature, not from art."

"I have heard of such damsels," replied Dick. "I suppose," he continued, "her mistress is a matchless dame."

"Ay, and you may have heard of her, good Dick," said Master Simon. "She is called Dame Alice Perrers; and, if her heart were as fair as her face, would be matchless indeed."

"Does she bear an ill name, then?" asked Dick.

"She is the king's mistress, good Dickon," whispered his companion; "and, rumour says, persuades him to commit many an unjust act."

"And yon ill-looking Robin Hood, fair sir—wot you who he is?"

"He is steward to the same Dame Alice," replied Master Simon, "and presumes, without encouragement, to be my rival with Mistress Eleanor Price, the bonny May-Queen."

"Marry," cried Dick, "I marvel at his assurance."

Master Simon drew himself up to his full height, cocked his hat, and smiled with self-complacency. "I have told you, good Dick," he said, "that you have a discretion beyond your years. You are now going to the great empress of cities, where men of might, nay, royalty itself, mate with men of sense; and if you adopt these two maxims—'Perseverance accomplisheth many things,' and 'Honesty is the best policy'—my word for it but you will fare well."

"Religion teaches me these things," replied Dick.

"Of that, anon," returned his companion; "but follow your religion, Dick, till you find a better."

"I will follow it for ever," muttered Dick, as he crossed himself.

"Poor boy!" said Master Simon aloud, and leaped into the waggon.

Dick continued to walk along by himself for a few minutes. The preceding conversation, and several others of a similar nature, which he had held with Master Simon, caused him much uneasiness. He felt a growing affection towards that person, for he had experienced much kindness from him on the road, and he was convinced that he was acquainted with his history; but the hints which he had thrown out on religious matters, and which almost amounted to heresy, awakened Dick's worst and deepest prejudices. He remembered, indeed, that Master Simon had encouraged him to adopt good morals; but Dick thought, and most correctly thought, that morality could exist only when built on religion. His meditation involved him in much perplexity,—but the better feelings of youth prevailed at last; and having resolved to adhere steadfastly to his own faith, and to suffer no diminution of his regard for Master Simon, he sprung into the waggon to prepare his breakfast.

He had, in the course of the day, several other conversations with Master Simon; and, as religion was not introduced, their friendship for each other continued to increase. It is not, however, the purpose of the chronicler, nor would it be a matter of general interest, to trace either their slow progress towards London, or the gradual development of their friendly feelings; and as nothing remarkable happened during the intermediate journey, which occupied them nearly a fortnight, this history will at once bring them near to their destination.

On the 13th of May, at sunset, the waggoner halted at an hostelry within Harnsey, or, as it is now designated, Hornsey, and intimated to his passengers, that, as he did not wish to reach town before day-break, he would remain there till midnight. Both Dick and Master Simon, on receiving this intimation, determined to pro-

ceed forwards on foot ; and having refreshed themselves with a cup of metheglin, which was paid for by the latter, they set forth accordingly.

They soon reached Highgate Hill, where, bidding his companion look around, Master Simon paused.

Before them lay the broad and fertile valley of St. Pancras, the fair manor of Cantelows, which belonged to the prebendaries of St. Paul's, the vale of Highbury, and the rich manor of Totchele, now Tottenham, where, when the survey of the Domesday was executed, there were "four villaus and four bordars, wood for one hundred and fifty hogs, and forty shillings arising from the herbage." The rich pasture and arable land was agreeably relieved by various edifices, some grouped and some isolated ; and among these last, conspicuous from its size, was the predendal mansion at Kentistoun. There was the distant church of Pancras, too, which, says old Norden, "standeth all alone, as utterly forsaken, old and wether-beaten, which, for the antiquity thereof, it is thought not to yeeld to Paules in London." Caen Wood, or, more anciently, Ken Wood, which afterwards became the seat of the noble earls of Mansfield, and Hornsey Wood, which then, as now, belonged to the church, next attracted the eye ; and the city far below, seated on the serpentine Thames, formed altogether a scene which could not be surpassed.

A little to the dexter-side of the spot where our travellers were standing, on the site of the existing free-school, stood the chapel or hermitage, which, says Lysons, was erected by a poor infirm hermit, of whom, however, it may be observed, that he must either have wrought under supernatural influence, or, despite of his infirmities, must have possessed a greater degree of strength than has been awarded to the most hale among our cotemporaries. The hamlet of Highgate occupied the same site, though not so much ground, as the present village ; and was remarkably neat and clean.

The two spectators of this beautiful prospect knew, from the vocal and instrumental music which they overheard, that the vespertine service was being celebrated in the chapel ; but, owing perhaps to disinclination on the part of Master Simon, and to the power of novelty over the mind of his companion, neither one nor the other entered the sacred structure. The service, indeed, was soon over ; and, before our travellers were satiated with the natural beauty of the scene before them, their attention was diverted to a less pleasing matter.

The efflux of people from the chapel repaired to a wooden statue of the Virgin, which, painted to imitate mortality, and mounted on a pedestal of stone, stood in the centre of the road. Some of them began to dance in a circle round the image, others knelt in prayer, and, as Dick and his companion approached, they all joined in the following hymn :

Ave Maria.

Ave Maria! to thee we sing

With the morning's first fair light,
And when the sun does upward spring,
Or declines in realm of night:

And Mother, maiden and divine !
 Sitting high beside thy Son,
 Our meed be grace and prayers of thine,
 And, for aye, thy will be done.

Ave Maria! who watchest o'er
 The angelic choir above,
 And on the true who thee adore
 Straightway sheddest smiles of love ;
 Oh, smile thou now, and smile again,
 For the human lot is care ;
 But smiles of thine assuage its pain,
 Maiden Mother ! Maiden fair !

They were about to repeat the first stanza of the hymn, and one voice had already ejaculated *Ave*, when a tall man, having made his way through the crowd, sprung on the pedestal. Master Simon, on seeing him, uncovered his head, and bade Dick follow his example, which he accordingly did. Such, indeed, was the impression which the stranger made on the spectators, that, directly he appeared, the majority of them took off their hoods, and the most respectful silence was maintained by all. Dick, surprised beyond measure, enquired his name.

Master Simon, in a whisper, replied—"BILL SMITH."

That extraordinary person, a humble journeyman mechanic, was well calculated for the holy design to which he devoted his life. Possessed of surpassing abilities, far beyond the opacity of his station or his times, he had immediately, on the revelation of the creed of that celebrated reformer, discovered the purity and excellence of Wickliffe; and, having been admitted his first disciple, assisted to diffuse his doctrine over the nation. The mightiest men of the age, and even, it was rumoured, the stern and haughty John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, had knelt for his benediction; but, unaffected by the distinction which he had thus attained, the blacksmith pursued, conjointly with his missionary duties, his mechanical profession. To such an extent, through his agency, had the new creed been disseminated, that the Pope had at last issued a bull, commanding the King, under pain of an interdict, to exterminate it and its professors; and, in pursuance of this object, about six weeks anterior to the present occurrence, the government had adopted measures, which, with other matters, will be detailed in the next chapter.

Smith was about the middle age, though his countenance, impressed with the gravity and calmness which religion is wont to assume, bespoke him older. His figure was tall and commanding; and the loose dress of russet in which he was clad, and which was the costume adopted by all the Lollards, was admirably suited to his complexion.

On gaining the pedestal, he looked round for a moment on the silent congregation, and, raising his eyes to Heaven, seemed lost in inward prayer. He then began his discourse, in which, to the amaze-

ment of Dick, he compared the Madonna's image to the golden calf of Aaron, which simile, as none of them knew anything of Aaron, was Greek to his audience. He declared, that the Virgin, though the most honoured among women, was, when living, a frail mortal, susceptible of the same passions, open to the same influences, liable to the same wants, as the less worthy of her sex. Though, he said, there was every reason to believe that she was one of the communion of saints, yet so little was known of the other world, save from the Gospel, which they never heard, that they could not ascertain her real position. He bade his audience to honour the saints as they would honour the memory of the wise and pious, for honour to them, whether they were quick or dead, was gratifying rather than offensive to their Creator. "Nathless," he said, "honour includes not worship, for worship is due to One only, and that One is Omnipotence."

A buzz at this instant arose from the audience; and, on looking round, Dick saw a priest, clad in vestments, and bearing a white cross in his hand, running towards them. He was followed by the beadle, and seven or eight men, armed with staves. The greater part of the crowd, on the first appearance of this force, slunk away, and Dick importuned Master Simon to follow their example; but, instead of acceding to his request, he held him with gentle force by the arm, and remained on the spot.

Smith, without moving from the pedestal, enquired if the bystanders were part of the approaching priest's flock; and being answered in the negative, and assured that they were all followers of himself, he directed them to preserve a peaceful demeanour.

In the meantime, the priest and his coadjutors drew nigh. Their force was superior to that of Smith; for they were ten in number, and the Lollards, including Dick, comprised eight only. These, however, with the exception of Dick, were resolute; and, feeling secure of the protection of the Duke of Lancaster, were prepared to withstand any molestation. From the well-known character of their approaching adversary, Sir Ambrose Pollard, of Highgate, they might have expected that such would ensue; for in order to support his reputation for sanctity, which he had acquired by reputed austerity of life, he pursued the most intolerant measures against all who were opposed to Romanism. They might have expected, therefore, that he would interfere with them; but they could not have anticipated the extent of his interference.

On coming up with them, Sir Ambrose glanced hastily over the the assemblage; and, fixing his eye on Dick, perceived that he was somewhat daunted.

"What dost thou among heretics, thou blossom of sin?" he demanded.

"Nothing, an it like you, Sir Priest:" replied Dick.

"Nothing!" iterated the priest, "then take thou that for thy pains!" and, with the cross which he bore in his hand, he struck him over the face.

The blood gushed from Dick's nostrils, and he fell down in a swoon.

"Thy pains, Sir Ambrose, deserve a better meed," cried Master





*Jack Whittington maltreated in the affray
between the
Romanists & the Lollards.*

Simon, and, while he was speaking, he sprung on the bosom of the priest.

"Lollards to the rescue!" vociferated Smith; and, leaping from the pedestal, he dashed among the enemy.

The Lollards manfully seconded the movement of their leader, who, having wrested a staff from one of his opponents, seemed likely to put a speedy end to the conflict. A reinforcement, however, was seen advancing to the priest's aid; and the Lollard captain drew off his forces, leaving Dick and Master Simon in the hands of the enemy. The retreat was effected in an orderly manner, for the fugitives, fortunately, were able to outrun their pursuers, and the priest was fain to content himself with two captives.

"Throw the dogs into the vault of the chapel, Sir Beadle," cried the priest; "and to-morrow, by our offended Lady's help, they shall on to London. Bind the man-heretic, but the youngster you may leave loose, and haply he'll come to his senses the sooner."

"Ay, ay, Sir Ambrose," replied the beadle; and, binding Master Simon's hands behind him, he led his captives to the place of duress.

This, as the priest had directed, was the vault beneath the chapel, and had been used, by those who had entrusted their manes to the care of the church, as a place of sepulture. Dick was deposited on the dank floor; and the beadle having loosened the collar of his gabardine, in order that he might breathe more freely, took a jailer's leave, and secured the entrance on the outside.

Dick soon recovered from his swoon; and, having been made acquainted with their situation by Master Simon, felt his attachment to priest-rule beginning to wane.

"It is a said mischance, Master Simon Racket," he said, at length; "but it boots not to despond. We should rather, with the help of St. Julian, devise some way of escape."

"I will none of your saints," replied the other, "for they say this priest is a saint, and I doubt not but they will canonize him hereafter. I will apply to my Father who is in Heaven, and who, if there be any such folk, is mightier than the saints."

Dick, whose eyes had now become familiar with the opacity of the vault, observed his companion kneel down. He himself repeated a *Pater-noster*; for though, when in communication with his fellow-creatures, he was undaunted as he was gentle, the place which he now occupied excited a host of ideal terrors. As he endeavoured to survey the vault with his eye, and found himself unable to penetrate to its limits, he became, like a good Catholic, fearful that the inmates of the coffins which were ranged on shelves round the vault, and which his fears had already detected, might visit his curiosity with personal interference. He determined, therefore, to wait Master Simon's assistance, which that person soon vouchsafed him.

"Have with you, gaffer Dick," cried Master Simon, as he rose from his knees; "have with you; but you must first unloose my hands."

"Dick drew forth his knife, or, as it was generally called, skene,

which was then the sole instrument used at meals, and which, as it was always carried about the person, was frequently applied to less pacific purposes. "Thou art free so far," he said, and cut the hand-bonds in twain.

"But, gaffer," interposed Master Simon, "we have the greatest difficulty to meet as yet; and, by hollydome, I see not a crevice that a ghost, much less a substantial man, could contrive to creep through."

"Say as little as you like about ghosts," whispered Dick. "But look, spy you not a glimmer of light yonder?"

"Gramercy, do I," returned Master Simon; "and I wis 'tis daylight."

"Nay, fair sir," said Dick, "the day is spent; but, not-the-less, 'twill suit our purpose."

As he thus expressed himself, Dick pushed on to the spot which he had pointed out. The light, as he had supposed, was that of Heaven; but its faintness augured the expiration of day. It entered through a small square orifice, such as may still be seen in the vaults of old churches, but which, though it offered no obstruction in the shape of bars, seemed to be at too great an altitude to afford them an outlet.

"A pleasant prospect, truly," muttered Master Simon; "but the backward view—the brimstone cap and gown of pitch—offends the nostrils."

"And is that likely to be our portion, Master Simon?"

"Which?" asked the other.

"The stake?" said Dick, shuddering.

"Nay, boy, be not afeard," replied Master Simon. "While John of Gaunt can wield a sword, or England holds a Bill Smith, the Church will crave in vain for burnt offerings. But I was thinking what she would do if she durst; and even as it is, if this churlish priest charge us with riot, mischief may come of it."

Dick turned away with a throbbing heart. He then advanced a few yards up the vault, and, as he was proceeding farther, came into collision with some upright body. He uttered an exclamation, but Master Simon could not tell whether it was one of terror or delight.

"What hath happed thee, Dickon?" he cried.

"A ladder!" exclaimed Dick.

"Of a surety, then," said Master Simon, bounding forwards, "it is by that, when a great man is buried, the priests descend to sing *de profundis*. Ugh!" he exclaimed, as he examined the ladder with his hands, "'tis rotten as touchwood."

"'Twill bear our weight, I ween," rejoined Dick. "Catch thou hold of that side, fair sir; and let us transfer it to the aperture."

The ladder, however, resisted their efforts to remove it; and Dick, on ascending to examine the cause, discovered that it was bolted to a trap-door, in the roof of the vault. But the bolt being weak, he soon mastered this difficulty; and, with the help of Master Simon, the removal of the ladder was at last effected.

CHAPTER III. THE ESCAPE.

WHICH RELATES THE MANNER OF DICK WHITTINGTON'S ENTRY INTO LONDON.

It sometimes happens, in moments of perplexity or danger, that an essential particular will escape the observation of a far-seeing leader, and, when all would otherwise be lost, be provided for by the foresight, or corrected by the personal prowess, of an inexperienced recruit. And, to quit the camp for civil life, there often arise instances, in the middle and humbler walks of society, of puerile caution and decision, in contradistinction to the imprudence and irresolution of maturity. Thus it was, that when Master Simon Racket and Dick Whittington had placed the ladder against the aperture of the chapel vault, the latter person reminded his comrade that they had still some preparations to make, and that it would be advisable, in order to facilitate their escape, to tarry the setting in of night.

"By my sooth, gaffer," said Master Simon, "you speak sensibly. It is likely, I ween, that they may have set a watchman outside; and this aperture, they well know, is the only outlet which will avail us. Wherefore, gaffer, we will abide still till dark."

"Ay, fair sir," replied Dick, "but suppose we should have to run hard?"

"Truly, Dick, I am your mate at that. I will run you a mile or two like a troop of Frenchmen, when chased by two Englishmen. I can run you with most men, I warrant."

"In those crooked buskins?" asked Dick, pointing at Master Simon's shoes.

"Most sapient Dick," said the other, "thou hast a keen knowledge of matters, I promise thee: nathless, Dick, these be not known by the name of crooked buskins, but, better, as crackowes, being of foreign origin, and, moreover, of goodly shape. Howbeit, they are not made for flying men, wherefore they must be altered."

And, stooping down, Master Simon took off the gilt chains which fastened the peaks of his shoes to his knees, and having put them in the pouch of his doublet, and stripped his hood of the cord which encircled it, he bent the peaks of his crackowes over the top, and lashed them down with the cord. He surveyed them for a moment with a look of the greatest complacency; and

as he glanced at the full firm limbs which they footed, and which his tight hose revealed somewhat too distinctly, muttered something about fine legs being indispensable to an aspirant for the favour of fair ladies—a prejudice which seemed to inspire him with a comfortable degree of contentation.

“The ladder is somewhat crazy, Master Dickon,” he observed, shaking it with a gentle hand, “but it must needs serve our turn, I suppose.”

“Methinks,” replied Dick, “when we determine on ascending, I had better mount me first, for if it give way then (and I think it will not), ’twill at least serve me to win the top. Then, with my help, you can get up without much difficulty.”

“Well said, Dick,” returned Master Simon, “and bravely.”

“Be it so settled then, fair sir,” rejoined Dick; and they waited silently for a favourable hour.

At length, when the increased darkness betokened night, though, unfortunately, it was one of the mild starlit nights of May, Dick ascended the ladder. On reaching the summit he protruded his head from the aperture to reconnoitre; but as the view on either side was interrupted by a buttress of the chapel, he was unable to make a complete survey. Having, however, listened a moment, and hearing no sounds to alarm him, he pronounced it all right, and crept into the shadow of one of the aforementioned buttresses. Master Simon then commenced his ascent; but, though it afforded a firm support to the light person of his companion, the ladder was not adequate to his superior weight. He felt the thrums trembling beneath his feet, and had just grasped a hold of the stanchions of the aperture, when, with a sonorous crash, the ladder gave way.

“Haste, for the love of heaven!” whispered Dick, “we are discovered.”

Master Simon bounded out of the aperture, and had just gained his feet, when a third person confronted them.

“Ho, ho, my rovers!” he cried, “you’ve got out, have you?”

The speaker was a powerful-looking man, dressed, as were all the watchmen of the period, in a black-jack, or jerkin of proof—so called from certain pieces of iron, shaped like diamonds, which were strung in rows round the jerkin, and which swung round with every movement of the body—a buff hood, and hanselines of the same material. Master Simon, however, was not intimidated by his formidable appearance; but, summoning all his strength for the purpose, straightway administered him a blow in the face. His adversary, though he was armed with a falchion, instantly closed with him; and in the struggle which ensued, and in which he had the advantage, contrived to drag Master Simon to the other side of the buttress. There he succeeded in throwing him, and putting his right foot on his breast, seized a rope which was hanging down by the wall, and pulled the alarm bell.

Dick, unwilling to leave his friend in durance, had been watching for an opportunity to interpose, but had hitherto been foiled. At this instant, however, he darted forwards, and so stealthily, that he was unobserved. The watchman was holding Master Simon with one hand, and pulling the alarm bell with the other, when, throwing all his weight on the blow, Dick plunged his skene into the muscles of his arm. The watchman bellowed with pain and surprise, and turned to attack his assailant, but Master Simon, relieved from the pressure of his foot, sprang to his feet, and, with a well-directed blow, prostrated him on the earth.

The two fugitives instantly made for the high road, and, on reaching it, discovered that a hue-and-cry was already raised. The whole hamlet seemed to have turned out auxiliaries; and horses, as well as men, were put in requisition for the pursuit.

"If we can but reach yonder valley," blustered Master Simon, running at his utmost speed, "I can put them off the scent."

But the pursuers, being mounted, were rapidly gaining on them, and Master Simon deemed it politic to take to the bush. They had scarcely resolved upon this course, and planted themselves in a copse by the road-side, when a party of their pursuers galloped past, hallooing each other forwards.

"Of a surety," observed Master Simon, in a broken whisper, "the villains are at fault. Follow me, Dickon, and thou shalt have part of my bed in Aldgate to-night."

Though it was not an easy task to follow Master Simon, whose route lay over ploughed fields and five-bar gates, Dick was too expert a pedestrian to be run short, and, to the surprise of the active citizen, manifested none of that timidity which would have been only natural to a boy of his years. Indeed, instead of uttering any expression of fear, he could scarcely repress the exultation, and even laughter, which the circumstances of their flight excited; and his inclination to risibility was increased, if not occasioned, by the ludicrous figure of his good-natured companion. Puffing and running, and occasionally looking back over his shoulder, and then trying to make some broken sentences understood, and groaning at his bad success or short wind, Master Simon Racket was rather a laughable spectacle to one whose perceptions of the ridiculous were as sensitive as those of Dick.

They soon reached the vale of Highbury, which was the locality that Master Simon considered free of danger, but as it was two hours after curfew, the place where he had expected to find entertainment was closed. Having rested awhile, they resumed their journey, and arrived at Aldgate without further interruption. Here, though it was contrary to law, Master Simon was too well known to the watch to be refused admittance; and, without being questioned by the warder, he led Dick through the postern.

As Dick entered the city of London, and, taking off his hat, devoutly crossed himself, the clock of St Paul's Cathedral chimed

the hour of midnight ; and at each stroke of the hour, as the sound rang solemnly over the slumbering city, he felt his young heart quake with involuntary apprehension. This, then, was London—the great and magnificent London, which, though yet in its infancy, was a giant among the nations of the earth. There it lay, sad and silent as a lonely sepulchre, with its repose broken only by the creaking of its countless sign-boards, the periodical cry of its wakeful warders, or the more solemn warning of its iron-tongued clocks. And how soon, in a few short hours, would it wake to worldliness again ! when its broad river, which was like the life-blood of England, would pour in the world's wealth to London marts,—when its quays, its shops, its streets, and its palaces, would be busy with life and speculation !

CHAPTER IV. THE CITY.

SHOWS HOW THE CITIZENS OF LONDON WERE DIVIDED IN THEIR
POLITICAL OPINIONS, AND HOW THE ROMAN CLERGY INCITED
THE MOB TO RIOT.

HAVING brought Dick to the termination of his journey, it is necessary, before his further progress can be noted, that the chronicler should glance at the great political events which then agitated the metropolis.

From the time of the demise of the Black Prince, about a year previous, the king had taken little interest in public affairs, which were conducted by his other far-famed son, John of Gaunt. This illustrious prince, who is ancestor of the existing ducal family of Beaufort, then possessed the confidence of all parties; but his opposition to the Romish clergy, with whose arrogance and enormous crimes he was justly disgusted, soon deprived him of many of his adherents. The priesthood, including all the wealthier denominations of monks and friars, availed themselves of every opportunity of assailing his administration, and, not content with distorting facts, endeavoured to lead the public to believe that he was aiming at the crown.

Among the boldest of his opponents was Sir Peter de la More, an active and wary demagogue, who, soon after the Duke of Lancaster's accession to power, introduced to parliament an insolent address, which, with other things, required his instant removal. For this and some other misdemeanours he was committed a prisoner to Newark Castle, where he remained in confinement for some time. The clergy, who regarded him as their champion, ascribed this arbitrary act, not to the duke, but to the influence of Dame Alice Perrers, of whom Stowe says, "by overmuch familiaritie she had with the king, she was the cause of much mischief in the realme; she, exceeding the manner of women, sate by the king's justices, and sometimes by the doctors in the consistories, perswading and disswading in defence of matters, and requesting things contrarie to lawe and honestie, to the great dishonour of the king." But though the lady had the credit of the act, the priests hinted that she had been urged to it by the duke, whom they stigmatized as her confederate; and,

notwithstanding that the public morals were not very punctilious, the idea of there being such a contract between such persons, excited general discontent. Thus two parties were created among the commonalty, and the aristocracy, though the greater part sided with the duke, were also divided.

The clergy had a powerful advocate at court in Walter Wickham, Bishop of Winchester, who held the office of lord chancellor. By acting a double part, and seeming to discountenance the populace, he contrived to deceive the duke for some time; and while he pretended to censure, was intriguing to bring in, the opposition. His real principles, however, were soon discovered, and he was deprived of his office, and, after undergoing a trial, of his bishopric.

This measure raised the church in arms. From the cathedral pulpit to the public cross, by mitred bishop and mendicant friar, the Duke of Lancaster was denounced as an enemy of the church, a betrayer of the king, and an oppressor of the people. The citizens were told, in a sermon preached at St Paul's cross, that this attack on the rights of churchmen was but the precursor of a more violent assault on the privileges of the city; and they were exhorted, as they valued their franchise, to insist on the restoration of the bishop. Nor were the nobility suffered to remain quiescent. It was represented to them, with all the jesuitry for which the priests of Rome are so notorious, that the duke was aggrandizing himself at their expense, and that, when he had prevailed against the church, he would turn his power against them. At this crisis a parliament was assembled, and, though the majority were his adherents, the duke thought it prudent to restore the bishop.

"About this season," says Hollinshed, "there rose in the university of Oxenforde a learned man, John Wickliffe, borne in the north parts, who, being a secular priest, and a student in divinitie, began to propose certeine conclusions greatlie contrarie to the doctrine of the church in those daies established." Through Wickliffe did the duke endeavour to enlighten the citizens; and Bill Smith, whom this history has before noticed, ably supported him. But the church was too deeply concerned to endure their attacks patiently; and therefore, on the 19th of February, 1377, Wickliffe was cited before the bishops in St Paul's church, "there to be convicted for words that he had spoken."

In the meantime every machination which papacy could invent was resorted to for the purpose of exciting the people. Sermons were preached in the most public places, exhorting all christians to support the church, and threatening the diffident with the most terrible punishment; and emissaries were dispersed among the populace, who hinted that the duke was a heretic, and Wickliffe an agent of the devil. The rabble, whose opinions were soon

turned, were thus brought into opposition to their own interests, and, though they had originally been disposed to favour Wickliffe, ranged themselves on the side of the bishops. Such was the state of affairs when the 19th of February arrived.

"After the ninth houre," says Stowe, "the duke and Sir Henry Percy, and divers other assisters going before him, Wickliff was brought forth, not only by the common serjeants, but also by Sir Henry Percy himselfe, who was chiefe marshal of England, being by the way animated by his favourers not to feare the bishops, neither the concourse of people, seeing that he was walled in by so many knights and others." He did not display any fear; and his judges, surprised at the coolness with which he met the charges brought against him, and anticipating an exposure of their own colossal iniquity, were afraid to proceed. The mob were accordingly urged to interfere; but Sir Henry Percy, penetrating the design, commanded his followers to keep them back. For this he was rebuked by the Bishop of London, who threatened to expel him from the church; when the Duke of Lancaster, exasperated at the prelate's arrogance, swore that he would drag him by his beard from the altar. This silenced the bishop, but the mob were not so easily quieted. A tumult broke out in the church, and the court adjourned, leaving Wickliffe at large.

The clergy were chagrined beyond measure at this result. They fully expected that Wickliffe would have been condemned, and as he had escaped through the instrumentality of the duke, they boldly denounced that personage as a heretic. Excited by these bitter harangues, the populace ran to arms; and proceeding to the Savoy, where the duke resided, attacked that edifice. The duke and his household were absent, and no one was in the palace except a Lollard priest, who, says Stow, "chauncing to mete them, asked of some what that business meant. Whereunto he was answered, that they went to take the duke and the Lord Percy, that they might be compelled to deliver to them Sir Peter de la More, whom they unjustly kept in prison. The priest said that Peter de la More was a traytour to the king, and worthie to be hanged. With which words they all cried, 'this is Percy, this is the traytour of England, his speech bewrayeth him, though he be disguised in apparel.' Then ran they all upon him, striving who would give him his death's wound; after they had wounded him they carried him to prison, where he soon died."

The Bishop of London, who had been the principal inciter of the rioters, now began to dread the duke's resentment; and with a view of deceiving him, in which he succeeded, rode into the city, and exhorted the mob to disperse. Thus order was restored; and the palace, which was on the point of being destroyed, preserved from the popular fury till the next outbreak.

It is necessary to add, in order that the chronicler may avoid a second digression, that the duke, blinded by the crafty policy of the prelate, ascribed the attack on his palace, and the brutal murder of the clergyman, to the citizens. Highly exasperated, he swore that the mayoralty should thenceforward be abolished, and that, as a prevention to future disorders, the city should be governed by a marshal, to be appointed by the king. This project was still in agitation when Dick arrived in the metropolis.

CHAPTER V. THE SHIP.

IN WHICH DICK VISITS THE BARK UNICORN, WHERE A SERIOUS
ACCIDENT BEFALLS HIM.

As the bells of the priory of the Trinity, the convent of the Minories, the monastery of the Crossed or Crutched Friars, and the other temples and religious houses in the neighbourhood, began to summon the devotee to matinal prayers, and the light of a lovely May morning streamed through the casement of his lodging, Master Simon Racket awoke from a slumber which had for several hours absorbed his faculties, and, sneezing three times, seemed to be undecided whether to rise or no. But the bells continued to chime, the light continued to pour through the reticulated window, the morning freshness was too delightful to be resisted, and, after a vain attempt to recall his dreams, he emerged from the bed-clothes.

"Gramerey, comrade!" he cried, awaking Dick with a shake, "'tis nigh the sixth hour. Art rested enough?"

"In sooth, fair sir," replied Dick, "I was a-weary when I lay down, wherefore I have slept beyond my hour. But thanks to holidame!" he continued, as he turned out on the floor, "I am much refreshed."

"Don thy clothes then, Dickon," rejoined the other, "and we will break our fast on shipboard."

"Where?" asked Dick.

"Master Cobb's ship, the Unicorn," replied Master Simon. "It lies down at the Queen's Hithe, where, when you are appareled, we will wend our way."

Dick dispatched his ablutions, and having attired himself with more than ordinary care, declared his readiness to proceed. Accordingly, they descended to the street.

The first object which, on his reaching the street, attracted Dick's attention, was the gate by which they had entered the city on the antecedent night. This, according to Stowe, "is called Aeldgate, because of the antiquity or age thereof. This is one and the first of four principal gates, and also one of the seven double gates, mentioned by Fitzstephen. It hath had two pair of gates, though now but one; the hooks of them both remain. Also there hath been two port-closes (portecullises). For antiquity of the gate, it appeareth by a charter from King Edgar to the

knights of Knighton Guild, that in his days the said port was called Ealdgate, as you may read in the ward of Portsoken."

As he gazed on this venerable structure, and his companion humoured him so far as to relate some of the historical incidents connected with it, a third voice struck into the conversation.

"Thou spokest not, brother Simon, of the spoliation of the children of Israel. Tell now, how our dwelling-places were destroyed to build up the gate of the Gentile."

"Marry, Master Salmon," replied the citizen, as, turning round, he recognized a friend in the person of the stranger, "you would recall a matter which makes me blush for our guild. Pr'ythee speak not of it; for our discourse may give offence."

As Master Simon spoke, he fixed his eye on Dick, whom the stranger immediately turned to scrutinize. Dick, though he saw that his examiner was a Jew, met his glance with the unassuming air which was characteristic of his face; and, while his own appearance was undergoing examination, did not fail to make reprisals. The Jew seemed to have reached his fiftieth year. He was attired in a long black gown, open in front, and collared with a coarse fur; a cap of black cloth, which fitted close to his head; a brown doublet, and hose of the same colour. His beard was long, and descended to his breast; where, attached to a gilt chain which was turned round his neck, an antique amulet, or locket, was suspended.

"Thou hast not sojourned long amongst us, good youth," he said to Dick, "and knowest not our ways; wherefore, I pray you, beware of the children of Mammon. Go thy ways, brother Simon; we shall see each other anon."

"Farewell, Master Salmon," rejoined the citizen; and, taking Dick by the arm, he walked leisurely down Aldgate.

"You would like to know somewhat of yon Jew, I ween," he said to Dick.

"If it be not sin to tell," replied Dick, crossing himself.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Master Simon, "your religion damns him whether he be good or bad. And yet Dickon," he continued in a milder tone, "our Lord was a Jew."

Dick made no reply.

"Well," continued the other, "Master Salmon, for so he is called, is the artfullest pottingar in the city. He will heal you a wound, or cure you a fever, or cut you off a limb, with marvellous dexterity. In sooth, your barber-chirurgeon, who mortally hates our pottingar, will swear you that he deals in art magic; and such a charge is his best commendation to wise men."

"Nay," cried Dick, "our Lady forefend!"

"Nathless, Dickon," rejoined Master Simon, "your clerk will tell you there is no such matter as art magic."

"Of a surety, then," replied Dick, "your clerk tells a falsity."

"Haply not," returned Master Simon. "But credit me, Dick,

yon Jew pottingar meddles not with it. Bethink you now, if he dealt in things damned, could he love a Christen man?"

"No; that could he not," said Dick.

"Then, by good St George! he loves me well," rejoined Master Simon. "Last Martinmas, when I lay ill of a fever, and your barber-chirurgeon could do nothing with me, his love recovered me right speedily. Nay, more, he has often proffered to teach me the craft of reading and writing."

"Can he read and write, then?" said Dick, amazed.

"Aye, can he," replied Master Simon; "and talk you Latin like a fat freer."

"Holydome! can he con you the stars?"

"I trow no," rejoined Master Simon. "But hold, Dick," he added, suddenly arresting his steps, "see you this priestcraft here?"

Dick looked towards the wall which his comrade pointed out, and perceived thereon a knightly scutcheon, reversed, and smeared with dirt. It bore the arms of the Duke of Lancaster—*Parti per pale*, Leon and England, three lions passant, *or*, encircled by the device of the recently-instituted Order of the Garter.

As Master Simon contemplated this insult to the patron of his party, his indignation began to evince itself in several imprudent expressions, which in all probability would have been followed by still more imprudent measures, when Dick, uttering an exclamation of surprise, disengaged himself from his hold, and ran off. Master Simon, amazed at this unexpected proceeding, remained gazing after him for a moment; but at last, fearful that he would entangle himself in the maze of courts which intersected the city, he followed him.

He perceived that Dick was pursuing another person, who was far a-head of him, and running at his utmost speed. Master Simon watched the direction in which they diverged from the street, and, gliding down a passage which cut off a considerable angle, hoped to intercept them at its termination. In this, however, he was disappointed, for though he found Dick standing there when he came up, and the courts around seemed to afford no place of concealment, the stranger had disappeared.

"He is gone," he cried, looking at Dick.

"Aye, gone, gone," rejoined Dick, mournfully.

"Marry, boy," said Master Simon, "What ails thee? Who is this carle?"

Dick hesitated. "I may not tell," he said, at length.

"You are a strange youth," observed Master Simon. "But clear your countenance I pray you, for we are going to face a strange man."

Master Simon took Dick by the arm, and turning down Bowe Lane, walked hastily towards the Queen's Hith, which, as a

stranger would have discovered from the forest of masts, was situated at the bottom of that thoroughfare.

The bustle which, even at this early hour, prevailed in this locality, and the appearance of business which its approaches wore, called forth the surprise and admiration of Dick, whose ideas of commerce were wholly derived from the market-place of Taunton, which he had visited occasionally in the company of Master Williams. His astonishment was increased when they arrived at the Queen's Hith, "so called," says Stow, "of a water-gate, or harborrow for boats, lighters and barges; and was (of old time) for ships, at what time, the timber bridge of London was drawn up, for the passage of them to the said Hith, as to a principal strand for landing and unlading against the midst and heart of the city."

"A plank! a plank!" shouted Master Simon, as they reached the quay.

'Aye, aye, my master,' replied a voice from one of the vessels."

A moment afterwards Dick and his comrade were on board of 'The Unicorn.'

It was, as ancient historians would say, "a greate ship," carrying two tall masts, and a raised forecastle and poop. Several mariners on the upper deck were engaged in painting and otherwise repairing the timbers, and a few were in the shrouds, amending the rigging. Leaving Dick to lean over the weather-bow, which looked towards the centre of the Hith, and had an unoccupied area in front, the chronieler will attend Master Simon down the hatchway, whither he was led in his way to the captain's cabin.

Master Simon inducted himself to this apartment without using the clicket, which, according to an old inventory of ship furniture, was then appended to the doors of the principal cabins; and, having first made a more respectful obeisance than was his wont, saluted its occupant.

"I pray you, Simon Racket," said this person, "sit you down on the settle; and, till I exact them from you, dispense with these antics."

"My Lord"—

"St George, man!" whispered the other, "thy unlucky respect will one day betray me. Call me, as you have been used to do, Master Cobbs."

"Well, Master Cobbs, then," said the citizen, seating himself on the settle, "I went, as you directed me, to Taunton Castle; but was unable to see the persons whom my mission concerned."

"Whom saw you, then?"

"I saw the Castilian, who told me that the Baron, accompanied by Master Henry, whom he called the young Cavalier,

and Hubert Cromwell, had gone to London, to attend the parliament."

"And told he not where they lodge in London?"

"Aye, did he," replied Master Simon. "They lodge with the Earl of Hereford, in Leaden Hall."

"You have done your mission well, honest Simon," rejoined Cobbs, "and have won my hearty thanks for your guerdon. Holydome, I have few friends, but you rank among the foremost."

"I am proudful to know it," said Master Simon.

"Well, be guarded in your portance towards me," returned Master Cobbs, "for the blood-hound is on the scent. Salmon, the Jew mediciner, tells me that he is attending the parliament, and carrying on an intrigue with Dame Perrers, who wants no incentive to do me wrong."

"Credit me," replied Master Simon, "if our pottingar have his eye on them they will hardly be able to harm you. Moreover, to speak sooth, I have a leman in the dame's service, and so I will be able to observe their motions."

"Many thanks, Simon," returned Master Cobbs. "But did you not visit the hostelry?"

"I did, and found that it had been destroyed by fire."

"I know the story," said Cobbs, smiling. "But the boy, young Whittington, heard you aught of him?"

"I brought him hither," replied Master Simon. "Yet I know not what we can do for him—nothing, in sooth, worthy of him, for he hath a stock of sense and courage, and religion to boot, much above his peers."

"And besides this," said Master Cobbs, "I love him, for he was my foster-sister's son. But I can do nothing now beyond placing him in Fitzwarren's kitchen. You will keep your eye on him; and when I return, Dame Perrers may be in disgrace, and I will then provide for him more meetly."

"This will be an unmeet provision indeed," said Master Simon. "But," he added, after musing a moment, "I see not how we can amend it."

"Alas, no!" returned the other. "Where did you leave him, Simon?"

"On the forecastle," replied the citizen.

"Then we will repair thither," said Master Cobbs, and rising from his seat, he moved towards the door.

As Masters Cobbs and Simon Racket ascended the hatch, they heard a loud scream, which was accompanied by a splash in the water.

"The boy is overboard," shouted half a dozen voices.

Master Cobbs sprang to the deck with the velocity of light. The next moment he was in the gangway; but before he reached the water, Dick—for him it was—had sunk for the second time.

The water was deep, and, what was of more consequence to an expert swimmer, the Hith was so crowded with vessels as almost to preclude swimming; but, undismayed by these circumstances, Master Cobbs immediately jumped in. He had scarcely touched the water when Dick rose again; and, stretching his arm to its full length, he strove to catch him. He missed him.

A buzz arose from the spectators, and, before it subsided, Master Cobbs had disappeared. It seemed an hour, though it was not a minute, before he again appeared, dragging Dick along with him. He held him above the water with his right hand, in which, as the blood was oozing therefrom, he had apparently received a wound; and with his left hand and legs, which he plied unceasingly, executed that nice and difficult movement which swimmers so much admire. A rope was thrown to him, and with the help of two of the mariners, who were just preparing to jump in after him, he succeeded in raising Dick to the deck.

"He is dead! he is dead!" cried Master Simon, as he loosened Dick's collar.

Indeed, Dick presented no sign of life. His eyes were open, and wore the glassy, imageless impression of death; and his nostrils and mouth, though not yet collapsed, were covered with foam. His limbs were motionless and stiff, and his pulse was still.

"Try thy skill in chirurgery, Simon," said Master Cobbs; " 'twould better befit thee than playing the woman."

"Alas, he is dead!" replied Master Simon.

"He is not dead," said a voice among the bye-standers.

Master Simon instantly made room for the speaker. It was the Jew mediciner.

"Bear him down to the cabin," said the Jew, as he passed his hand over Dick's heart. "Exclude all air, wrap him in blankets, and credit me, brother Simon, he will yet be restored to you."

The mediciner's directions were immediately obeyed; and, after he had dispatched Master Simon to his house for a casket which he specified, and which, he said, contained medicines of rare potency, he shut himself up with his patient.

Master Simon was not long away. On his return, he found Master Cobbs pacing the deck, and learned that the pottingar was still closeted with Dick. He descended to the cabin, and, inflicting a gentle knock with the clicket, the door was opened by the Jew, who took the casket, and dismissed him.

"I had rather," said the citizen, as he gained the side of Master Cobbs, "I had rather, Sir Cobbs, have been well soused myself."

"I am afeard," rejoined the other, "that Dick's is more than well soused. The pottingar's craft, I ween, will not avail him."

"Our Lord assolzie him, then!" said Master Simon.

"What, do'st pray for the dead?" asked Cobbs.



*Dick Whittington's Perilous Adventure
at the
Old Queen's Wharf.*

Master Simon coloured. "'Twas said without thought," he replied.

"And said with a good intent," returned Cobbs; "wherefore, Simon, 'twas a loyal prayer."

"And yet," observed a third voice, which they immediately knew to be that of the pottingar, "'twas without ground of reason."

Thus interrupted, the two friends turned round to reply to the Jew, when, to their amazement, they beheld Dick standing by his side.

"A marvel! a marvel!" shouted Master Cobbs.

Master Simon folded Dick in his arms.

"What matters the people?" said a little thin man, who, while the others were thus engaged, stepped on board.

"Ho, Master Fitzwarren!" cried Cobbs, "I am right glad to behold you. I would a moment's audience, an it like you."

"Surely," replied the other; and, nodding to Master Simon and the Jew, he followed Cobbs down the hatchway.

"I will see you to-morrow night, brother Simon," said the Jew.

"It shall be as you say," cried Master Simon.

The Jew, without further remark, quitted the vessel, and disappeared among the crowd of merchants who had now congregated on the shores of the Hith.

"How did this accident hap, Dickon?" asked Master Simon.

"In sooth," replied Dick, "I hardly wiss. I was leaning over the ship's side, and looking into the water, when I over-balanced myself, and fell in."

"You have had a sorry breakfast."

"I have fared ill," said Dick; "but thanks to our Lady Mother and my preservers, worse happed not."

"But art not hungry, Dick?"

"No, my master. Your pottingar has killed my appetite."

"That has he not mine," said Master Simon, "and so, with your grace, I will search me out some food. Ho, there!" he cried, striding towards the fore-castle, "Ho, master pantler! Sir keeper of the ship's cupboard! art beside thyself? Ho, there! Knowest not there be stranger guests, hungry stomachs, craving nurture?"

"Now, by Holydome and Sancte Antony," cried one of the mariners, "and Sancte Dunstan to boot, who fell in love with five virgins of snow, your worship speaks sooth. But our pantler—the fiend snatch him!—hath more care for his own cupboard, which he fills with berre, than he hath for the cupboards of other folks. You'll call a month, I ween, before he'll disclose his lockers."

"Where be they, then?" asked the citizen. "I'll disclose 'em myself."

"Follow me, your worship," said the mariner, springing down the fore-hatch.

"I'd need be a monkey to do that," said Master Simon; "nath'less, I'll make attempt."

He cautiously descended the hatch, and a few minutes afterwards returned alone, bearing a cake of dried bread, a large slice of beef, and a cup of wine. He sat down by the side of Dick, and commenced his breakfast, which he soon dispatched.

"So you are to have the same master as myself, Dick," he said, as he was masticating the last mouthful—"you are to serve Master Fitzwarren."

"That knew I not," replied Dick.

"But so I know," rejoined the other. "A right worshipful citizen he is, I warrant you. You will have a sorry service of it though, for your place will be a poor one.

"'Twill give me bread," returned Dick.

"And plenty, too," observed Master Simon, "if you can make a friend in the cook."

"Gramercy!" cried Dick, "will the cook be my pantler?"

"Aye," said Master Simon; "and, an thou wert as old as I, thou might'st fare well. But never mind, thou'lt have a fair friend in Mistress Alice, whom I will move in thy behalf."

"You have my good thanks," said Dick.

"Ugh!" shouted Master Simon, suddenly starting up, "look you at yon sea-pig! By Holydome! he has despoiled the pantler's stores."

Master Simon, as he spoke, pointed at the seaman who had so politely guided him to the ship's lockers, which, after taking what he wanted himself, he had left in his care. The man at this instant staggered across the deck; and, though quite drunk, had sense enough to comprehend Master Simon's accusation. "By Sanete Magdalen," he cried, "who fell in love with the seven virgins of snow, an thou darest call me thief, I'll drown thee."

"Thief! thou sea-pig! thou porpoise!" cried Master Simon, "I'll have thee before the Mayor: I'll have thee pilloried."

The speaker would probably have followed up his threats with ulterior measures, which course perhaps would have occasioned bloodshed; but before he had time to embroil himself so far, Masters Fitzwarren and Cobbs ascended to the deck. The sailor then became quite civil, and as Master Simon did not prefer any charge against him, and the others did not seem to be aware of the peccadillo which he had perpetrated, the matter ended.

Master Fitzwarren, after looking at Dick for a moment, beckoned him to approach.

"I have taken you into my service, boy," he said. "You will follow me hence; and my cook will show you your duty. Master Simon," he added, turning to that individual, "you may now return to the mart."

The merchant stepped ashore; and Dick, doffing his hood to Masters Cobb and Racket, followed him up the street.

CHAPTER VI. THE GARRET.

DICK IS DISCOVERED IN MASTER FITZWARREN'S KITCHEN, WHERE HE IS ASSOCIATED WITH AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE, AND FORMS A NEW ONE. HE IS LODGED IN THE GARRET, WHICH INTRODUCES HIM TO OTHER ACQUAINTANCE.

Six hours after the date of the preceding chapter—that is to say, about noon, Dick Whittington was standing in an angle of a spacious and lofty apartment, in the rear of a mansion in Leadenhall street. He was not the only inmate of the room, which fact the other took care he should keep in remembrance. Before, however, the chronicler speaks of the cook, it may be proper to say something of the kitchen.

From the angle where Dick stood ran a clean white dresser, surmounted by a range of shelves, which, as well as a range on the opposite side of the room, supported rows of pewter and wooden platters. The dresser itself was occupied by an uncooked baron of beef, a large tub of water, and a beaker, or spouted cup, filled with vinegar. The centre of the room was taken up by a long table, on which was the offal of a defunct goose—which hung from a spit before the fire—a pestle and mortar, and a posnet, or small porringer. The fire was contained in a huge and rudely-constructed grate; and the chimney, which was about ten feet broad at the bottom, and abutted five or six feet from the main wall, gradually narrowed as it rose. On the hearth was a broad-mouthed skillet, to catch the dripping from the roasting goose, a chafferer, or vessel to heat water, and a chafing-dish, filled with live coals. A part of a fitch of bacon hung by the side of the chimney; and beside the bacon was suspended a long iron spoon, a buck-handled carving knife, and a steel. A rude engraving, representing "*The Putte Browne Maid and her Modeman bold*," was pasted over the mantel, which was furnished with three brass lamps, a porringer, and a skillet.

The priestess of this culinary temple stood at the table in the centre, where she was zealously pursuing her avocations, which, however, did not prevent her from abusing poor Dick. She was short and fat in person, and of a cast of countenance which was anything but prepossessing. Her hood, which spoke her a widow, was black, and was fashioned like a dunce's cap till it reached her ears, where it curved off into a tippet, and fell over

her shoulders and back. Her jerkin fitted close to her body as far as her waist, when it opened in the centre, and curving into a peak on either side, fell over her hips. Her petticoat was long, so long as almost to preclude walking, which absurd custom, as well as the immodest tightness of the dress, was then fashionable.

Apparently, neither time nor sorrow had had much effect on the constitution of Dame Williams, whom the reader will have already discovered in the cook; for though her features had assumed a sharper aspect, her voice and temper were as disagreeable as ever. She had been railing some time at Dick, who was employed furbishing some brass posuets, when, being assailed by an unexpected fragrance, she turned round to the fire, and found that it arose from the goose, which he had forgotten to attend.

"Zooks, jackanapes!" she shouted, running towards Dick, who instantly made for the other end of the table, "I'll teach you to neglect your business. A malison on your pate!" she continued, as she found herself unable to come up with him, "will you stop?"

Dick stood at one end of the table, and the dame at the other; but directly the latter person made an advance, he made a counter movement. The dame, exasperated at this contumacy, chased him several times round the table; and, being unable to overtake him by this means, sprang on the table, and so arrested him.

"Holidame!" she cried, as she cuffed Dick about the ears, "you'll run away, will you? Gramercy! if my poor husband was here—our Lady assoil him!—he'd tell you a different story, I trow."

Dick sang out lustily while the dame was chastising him, and as his cries only increased her anger, he would probably have suffered more severely; but while he was struggling to regain his freedom, her arm was arrested by a third person.

"Dame! dame!" cried the intruder, "you will kill the poor boy. Nay, you shall beat him no more. Let him alone now, for the love of Magdalen!"

Dick managed to escape; and while the dame was grumbling at the young lady's interference, he cast his eye over the person of his deliverer.

She was nearly his own height, and, as far as he could judge, about a year older. Her person was slender, and promised, on her attaining muliebriety, perfect proportion. Her kirtle was of samite, embroidered with yellow satin, and laced up the front with silk of the same colour. In conformity with the prevailing fashion, it was fitted immodestly close till far below the hips, when it swept round in a semicircle, and revealed her long petticoat, which was furbelowed with fox skin. Her hair was combed

into a tuft of ringlets on either temple, and wound into a top-knot, in which she wore a white rose.

"You know, dame," she said to the cook, "my father bade you be kind to the boy."

"Well, Mistress Alice," returned the virago, "an he did tell me to be kind to him, did he tell me to let him be neglectful?"

"Nay; but he is a poor orphan, you know," replied Mistress Alice. "I have no mother myself; but he has neither father nor mother."

As Mistress Alice spoke, the tears chased each other down Dick's cheeks.

"An you stand whimpering there," cried the dame, "I will soon give you occasion. If my poor husband was here—our Lady assail him!—he'd serve you as was his wont."

"He never beat me in his life," said Dick. "He was too, too kind to me."

"What, hound!" vociferated the dame, "do'st belie the dead? Nay, an thou say'st so again, I will take thy life."

"In sooth, he shall have no further harm," said Mistress Alice. "Get thee to thy work, good boy. I know not thy name," she added, smiling.

"Dick Whittington, fair mistress," said Dick.

"Dick fiend!" cried the cook.

But seeing that Mistress Alice was resolute, and fearing that she would make a report of her conduct to Master Fitzwarren, Dame Williams repressed her wrath. Dick resumed his avocations with an aching heart; but, in order to show his protectress that he was worthy of her favour, laboured with increased diligence. He could not but think, however, that his situation placed him in a very unfavourable light in the eyes of Mistress Alice. He was aware, though his eyes were riveted on the posnet which he was furbishing, that she was scrutinizing his appearance, and he blushed, though, had he been asked wherefore, he could not have told. He was angry with himself. The only female who had ever shown him kindness had seen him weep—weep for a blow. Dick was only a boy, but they are mistaken who think that a young heart is not alive to shame, for his face burned. Mistress Alice observed his confusion, and, thinking that it was occasioned by her presence, quitted the kitchen. As Dick observed her retire, his feelings effused themselves in a flood of tears.

He saw before him a long course of suffering, mortification, and unhappiness; and, which afflicted him more, there was not one person from whom he could ask counsel. Master Cobbs, who had saved his life, he sincerely loved; but there was something about him—something which Dick could not fathom—that forbade any advances towards familiarity. Master Simon Racket, indeed, was familiar enough; but then, thought Dick, he is a

stranger, and a stranger might doubt my word. But Williams, where was he? Dick asked himself the question, and his tears flowed on.

The course of his reflection, however, was now interrupted by the cook, who, thinking herself secure from a second intrusion of Mistress Alice, began to renew her abuse. Dick, by calling to mind all the kindness which he had received from her husband, endeavoured to suppress the indignation which her taunts excited; but, though he succeeded for a time, he was unable to continue silent.

"So," cried the cook, after a momentary pause, "I'm to be pestered with you for ever, you bastard."

"That am I not," said Dick, "Master Williams often told me I was loyally born."

"Thou liest, malapert!" vociferated the dame. "An you dare contradict me again, this skillet shall batter your pate."

"I wish not to offend," said Dick; "but an you slander my dead mother—Jesu help her!—I will give you the lie."

"Thou wilt, wilt thou?" shouted the dame, "then take thou that!" and she threw the vessel of boiling water at his head.

Dick stooped to avoid the hissing missile, and caught it on his arm, which was severely scalded. He screamed with pain; and a moment afterwards Mistress Alice entered the kitchen. The cook was taken by surprise; but, with that cunning which is generally possessed by cruel and vulgar minds, she readily contrived an expedient.

"Oh dear!" she cried, when she saw Mistress Alice, "what hath happened thee, boy? Dickon, gaffer, art scalded?"

"Ay, am I," said Dick, taking off his gaberline.

"What, don't you weep, Dick?" asked Mistress Alice, amazed at his fortitude.

"No, fair mistress," replied Dick, "not while you look on."

"My matroncy to a moidore," said the cook, "but I will cure you in a minute!" and taking up a salt stand, she emptied its contents on the scalded flesh.

"In sooth, you will kill him!" screamed Mistress Alice. As she spoke she caught Dick's arm and plunged it in the tub of water which stood on the dresser.

Dick felt the pain assuaged immediately. Some cold cream, which Mistress Alice afterwards applied, completely withdrew the fire, and Dick's arm was soon convalescent. He did not tell the young lady how he had been scalded; and his silence on this point induced the dame to treat him less harshly during the day, which presented no further matter for the pen of the chronicler.

Dick waited in his corner in the kitchen, unmolested by the dame, for several hours after sunset, in the expectation that Master Simon would call to see him; but at length, when he gave up all hope of that person coming, and the clock struck the

ninth hour afternoon, he ascended to the garret which was assigned him as a dormitory.

This apartment was small in compass, and, except a stretcher and blankets, contained no article of furniture. Dick glanced once round it; and having said a *Paternoster*, and repeated two *Aves* for the soul of his mother, and one *Ave* for the souls of all Christian people, he threw himself on the stretcher.

But he could not sleep. The events of the past day had been so painful, and foretold, he thought, such a succession of ills, that he could not banish the recollection of them. And then, if for a moment he stifled these sad reminiscences, was there not Mistress Alice? What a fair creature! What lovely blue eyes she had! And surely, if there be one thing pre-eminently beautiful in God's creation, the choicest beauty is the blue eye of woman. In youth it will laugh, and shed joy over a desolate hearth, and bring a flush to a sad face. In age it retains its lustre; it reminds the beholder that the withered cheek below was once compared to the rose, and the shrinkled lips to richest coral.

Then Dick's thoughts reverted from Mistress Alice to his mother; and his cheek burned as he recollected the cook's impeachment of her continence. At length, worn out both in body and mind, he fell asleep; but his slumber, as his occasional starting evinced, was not refreshing.

Dick awoke trembling. He had been dreaming of the dead; of shrouds, sepulchres and coffins, of white-headed monks and grisly corses. He listened—the convent bell was tolling for a departed soul. He had the whole scene before him. The friars, clothed in white, with their cowls drawn down, and their lustrous eyes glaring from two small holes: how solemnly they marched up the dark aisles, which mocked the light of their tall tapers! He looked at the high altar, where the stoled priest was standing. As that solemn song, *De profundis*, rose from the mourners, the priest drew back the pall, and showed the ghastly face of the corpse—

But there was certainly something in the room. Tramp, tramp—it approached his bed. Tramp, tramp—surely a dozen feet must be treading the floor.

The icy perspiration poured in streams down Dick's forehead. He heard a distinct ticking in his ear, and, if he had been so minded, could have reckoned the pulsation of his heart. He covered his head with the blanket, which he drew close to his ears; but there was the footstep still—tramp, tramp. Dick knew that it was beside the bed—nay, he felt something like the fingers of a hand moving over his body. Despair, however passive, could endure this no longer; and, springing from the bed, Dick pronounced that name which both the quick and the dead must obey.

What a scream! *The garret was full of rats.*

CHAPTER VII. THE CAT.

DICK PURCHASES A CAT—HE GOES ON AN EXPEDITION WITH TWO FRIENDS, AND THEREBY SUSTAINS MUCH INCONVENIENCE.

MORNING came at last. Dick had had but little rest during the intermediate time, and when the clock tolled the fourth hour, he did not rise with his usual alacrity. Having, however, jumped on the floor, and looked forth on the bright morning, he donned his clothes with more cheerfulness, though, as he glanced at the gable roof of his garret, and detected the holes by which the rats found ingress, his gaiety subsided.

"I wish I had a cat," he said, aloud.

He hurried through his toilet, and then descended to the kitchen. Here he kindled the fire, scoured the table and dresser, brushed his master's buskins—for being a staid citizen, Master Fitzwarren had not yet adopted the shoes called crackowes—and performed the other duties which his tenure of office enjoined. As he was anxiously awaiting the descent of the cook, whom he hoped to please by his diligence, the door of the kitchen was thrown open, and Mistress Alice entered.

"Will you do me an errand, Dick?" she asked.

"Right speedily, an' please you, fair mistress," replied Dick.

"Then take you this vial to the Minories," said Mistress Alice, "and bring me some holy water from the chapel. Here," she added, holding out a penny, "the priest can give this in alms."

Dick took the vial and the penny, and, donning his hood, made his way into the street. He soon reached Aldgate, and turning into the thoroughfare who derived its name of Minories from a convent of nuns, which had been established there under the auspices of the lovely Queen Maude, he hastened to the chapel.

When he entered this edifice, Dick knelt down by the door, and, crossing himself, repeated a *Pater noster*. He then stepped forwards to a priest, who was standing in the chancel, and requested permission to fill his vial, which permission was immediately granted.

"I have further business with you, holy father," he said, as he placed the vial, which he had filled, in his bosom. "My mistress sent a penny to be given in alms."

"Thou art honest, my son," said the clergyman, taking the penny. "Kneel thou down now, and let me hear thy shrift."



*Dick Whittington purchasing his famous Cat
of the
Old Dame at Aeldgate.*

Dick detailed his sins with great exactness, except that he touched as lightly as possible on the affray with the priest of Highgate, and enlarged on the horrors of his subsequent imprisonment, which seemed to conciliate his auditor. The latter, having enjoined him to say two *Aves* every night, absolved him, and bade him beware of mixing with heretics thenceforward.

"And now, my son," he said, returning Dick the penny which he had given him, "because thou art honest, and neglectest not thy soul's weal, here is the penny for thyself. The intention of thy mistress—our Lady bless her—shall not be discarded, for I will give a penny to the poor in place of it."

Dick's heart was too full to speak. "*Benedicite*, my son!" said the priest, and, before Dick could reply, he disappeared.

Dick quitted the chapel, and proceeded up the Minories. Just as he reached Aldgate, he observed an old woman with a basket, sitting in the middle way; and, thinking that she might have some fruit for sale, he accosted her.

"I vend not fruit, gossip," replied the old woman; "but say, what wilt give me for my commodities?"

"I have only a penny," said Dick, who felt an irresistible inclination to get rid of his wealth.

"A penny!" cried the woman; "and would'st have this lovely cat for a penny?" As she spoke, she opened her basket, and Dick's ravished eyes beheld a beautiful black cat.

"Well, do'st like her looks?" she cried, perceiving Dick's ecstacy.

"Ay, do I, mother," returned Dick, "right well. I would she were mine."

"I'll warrant me thou'rt a chapman," said the woman. "Thou'lt chaffer with me about the price, and swear me in sooth, and all the maiden oaths that be, that thou hast only a penny."

"In sooth, I have no more," replied Dick.

"Gramercy!" cried the old woman, "I wissed right surely you would swear me in sooth. But come, you shall have her for two pennies."

"Nay," said Dick, colouring with indignation, "and you doubt my troth, I'll no more with you."

"Holidame!" rejoined the other, "thou'rt a lad of spirit. Here, give me thy penny, and take thou the cat."

Dick eagerly completed the purchase, and, holding puss to his bosom, hastened homewards.

On reaching his master's house he posted up to his garret, and deposited his cat under the stretcher. He then sought Mistress Alice, and having given her the holy water, he descended to the kitchen. Here he found the cook, who, with her usual arrogance, threatened to chastise him for absenting himself without her permission; but she was prevented from executing her threat, and at the same time induced to suppress her abuse, by the entrance of Master Simon Racket.

"Dick, my gaffer, my right trusty Dickon," exclaimed Master Simon, "give me thy hand, my roysterer, my twin brother."

"How fare you, Master Simon?" cried Dick, grasping his hand.

Master Simon made no reply, but turning to the dame, who looked on in astonishment, addressed her.

"Now, cook, thou purveyor of belly-timber, thou queen of kitchens," he said, "look you, thou hast a most fair countenance."

Dame Williams smiled as sweetly as she could. "An I believe all the gallants that tell me so," she replied, "I need be as vain as a peacock."

"Trust me, thou would'st not," returned Master Simon, archly. "But, to speak your favour, wilt spare this young gallant in the evening?"

"Ay, to company with you, fair sir," rejoined the dame. "I would not that he should sort with a pack of galliards or night-brawlers; but I trow he will meet no mischief when sorting with you."

"That can he not," said Master Simon; "so, this settled, I will bid thee good morrow, fair dame. And thee too, Dick," he added, shaking the latter person by the hand.

When Master Simon quitted the kitchen, the dame began to criticise his appearance, which, she said, reminded her of that of her poor deceased husband. Dick was at a loss to comprehend how she arrived at this conclusion, but he did not attempt to controvert it, particularly as Master Simon's praise of her complexion had made the dame rather affable. He listened, therefore, to her commendations of Williams, and where he could conscientiously do so, which was only when she spoke of his virtues, corroborated her assertions. This restrained her from abusing him throughout the day; and as he had not attained that age when every insult is stored up in the mind, and possessed a temper which forgot ill usage when kindness was manifested, he began to hope that an affection might yet spring up between them. Indulging in this and similar thoughts, which rendered his irksome duties less disagreeable, he waited patiently for the hour of vespers, when Master Simon summoned him forth.

The two friends walked along in silence till they reached Gracious, now Gracechurch, street. Here, pushing his elbow against Dick's side, Master Simon called his attention to the Duke of Lancaster's scutcheon, which, as has been before stated, was here exposed to public insult.

"That," he said, in a whisper, "shall be revenged to-night."

"What mean you?" asked Dick.

"Wilt join us, Dickon?" said Master Simon, smiling. "Thou wilt, I warrant me," he added, as Dick continued silent. "We will have Master Salmon, the Jew mediciner; and, by our fair city! there will be most choice sport. Bethink thee now, 'tis

for the honour of the guild, and, what may move thee more, for our own contentation."

"In sooth," cried Dick, laughing, "the dame has been deceived in thee. Thou would'st even make me a night-brawler."

But as Dick was nothing more than a boy, and boys, if they expect to derive sport therefrom, are easily moved to mischief, he was at last persuaded to join in Master Simon's project. This, as they proceeded towards the Jew's habitation, Master Simon in part disclosed to him, and though it somewhat shocked his notions of decorum, he had not the courage to decline abetting it.

The Jew's house was without Aldgate, on the road which led to the hospital of St Katherine. It was one of a row of detached houses, but unlike the others, which were all occupied by Jews, it wore a dark and uninviting aspect. The garden ground, which surrounded the domicile, was covered with weeds, save where a footway, leading from the wicket to the door, afforded no countenance to vegetation. The shutters in the front of the house, which was two stories high, were all closed, and the door was destitute of both clicket and latch.

Master Simon kicked against the door for some minutes without attracting any notice from the proprietor. At length, when he paused to join in Dick's laugh, a voice hailed them from within.

"Who knocks at the pottingar's door?"

"I cry you mercy, Sir Pottingar," said Master Simon, in a feigned voice. "I have heard many marvels concerning you, and wish to approve your cunningness. I prithee, an it be to your liking, you will presently admit me, and you shall thereupon be advertised of my business."

"An you be a staid burgher," replied the voice, "you shall have admittance straightway; but an you be that roystering galliard and night-walker, hight Simon Racket, you had best remove yourself."

Master Simon turned round to Dick, who was laughing with undue energy, and joined in his merriment. They were interrupted, however, by the opening of the door, and, being so bidden by the Jew, they entered the house.

The passage and staircase which was here revealed to them, and with which Master Simon seemed to be well acquainted, were of a piece with the frowning front of the exterior; but on ascending the stair, and following the Jew into an apartment at its summit, a different scene presented itself.

This room was circular, and, though there were no windows in the wall, was amply illuminated by a round skylight, which arose from the roof. The wall and ceiling were furnished with tissue, being in the fashion of a tent, and radiating from the edge of the skylight. In the centre of the room, beneath the skylight, was a table of massy oak, which, as well as the floor, was strewn with

curiously-inscribed papers. A rude telescope, with its end turned upwards, also stood on the table; and hence the Jew was reputed a magician—a name which, as it made him dreaded alike by the powerful and impotent, he did not disown. Raised hassocks, or, rather, enormous cushions, supplied the place of chairs, and the floor was carpeted with cloth of tissue.

Dick was amazed at the costliness of the furniture, and much more so at the cabalistic characters inscribed on the scattered papers, which he supposed to be spells. With this impression on his mind, he doffed his hood, and, ejaculating the necessary words, crossed himself. Master Simon reproved him for his superstition, but, before Dick could reply, the Jew interposed. Drawing Dick towards the table, he took up a manuscript in the old English character, and asked him if he could read it.

"Nay, fair sir," replied Dick, "that can I not."

"And yet," said the Jew, "'tis no glamour, but thine own tongue. Say, would'st thou be taught to read it?"

"Right gladly, good sir," rejoined Dick.

"Then my daughter, who is of thine own age, shall teach thee straight," returned the Jew. "Come, whenever thou canst, at this hour, and thou shalt be admitted. Wilt begin this eve?"

"An it so please your worship," replied Dick.

"Miriam!" cried the Jew.

A fold in the tapestry was drawn aside, and a tall and lovely girl, apparently about the same age as Dick, glided into the room. She smiled at her father, and then crossed to Master Simon, and inquired after his health.

"My daughter," said the Jew, as he met the glance of her dark eyes, "here is a pupil for you. You must instruct him, as well you can, in the craft of a clerk."

Miriam smiled, and so sweetly, that, as he gazed on her dark eyes and face, Dick thought her as lovely as Alice. Her hair was not raven, but it was still more beautifully black, and fell down her neck till it nearly reached the waist. Her eyes were dazzling, and their dark flash showed to advantage beneath her spotless forehead. Her eyebrows were slight and arched, and her complexion olive, which colour, next to the mingled rose and lily, is certainly the most beautiful. She wore a loose frock of sarcenet, which descended very little below her knees; wide white trowsers, drawn in at the ankle; and slippers of white satin. Her arms were covered with white crape, which hung loose till it reached the wrist, where it was fastened with a bracelet of gold. She drew a cushion towards the table, and, bidding Dick sit down, she began the task of an instructress. Master Simon and the Jew, thus safe from Dick's observation, opened a small box which lay on the floor, and took thence the corse of a dog, which they arrayed in a priest's surplice. They then wrapped it in a kerchief, and, sitting down before it, conversed in whispers.

"'Twas wrong in you to bring him, brother Simon," said the Jew. "If evil fall, his hurts will be on our hands."

"I tell you, Sir Mediciner, evil cannot fall," replied Master Simon. "There will be no affray, because, before we begin, we will take note that the watch be not about. And I pray you, if I brought him not, who was to climb the wall?"

"That could not I," returned the Jew.

"And credit me," said Master Simon, "that could not I. Where bide your reasons, then, Sir Pottingar?"

"Hark you," replied the Jew, "they will bide in yon scimeter to-night. An any of your watch give us molestation, I will bring off the boy scathless, or, by the Holy Temple! I will see to it."

"Wherefore not?" said Master Simon. "Believe my troth, an you lend me your rapier, I will make brave fight with you."

It had now become too dark for Dick to pursue his studies; but as he still remained by the side of Miriam, with whom he engaged in conversation, the Jew and Master Simon continued their dialogue. They spoke, however, in so low a tone, that their discourse could not be overheard by the others, nor was it of sufficient importance to merit insertion here. At length, when it became so dark that Miriam was obliged to ignite a taper, the Jew and Master Simon rose, and, arming themselves as they had previously arranged, they consigned the bundle to the care of Dick. They then took leave of Miriam, and, with Dick in company, quitted the house.

"We had best not be seen together, brother Simon," said the Jew. "Pass you on through the postern, and we will make after you."

Master Simon, accordingly, hastened his steps, and before Dick and the mediciner reached Aldgate, he was out of sight.

A watchman was standing in the postern-way, where he was stationed for the purpose of searching all suspicious-looking persons, as in compliance with a petition, signed by the mayor and alderman, which had recently been presented to the king, complaining that foreign wares were smuggled into the city, and, to the manifest prejudice of the commonweal, sold at a cheaper rate than the same articles could be produced by the home manufacturer, the king had ordered a strict watch to be maintained at the city gates, with a view of bringing the parties offending to justice. The Jew had forgotten this regulation, till, on reaching the gate, the person of the watchman recalled it to his memory. It was then too late to turn back, which would only have excited suspicion, and though he could have concealed the bundle under his gown, he could not take it from Dick without being observed. In this dilemma he determined to proceed with a bold face.

The Jew, indeed, was a stranger to fear. His heart, though endued with the softest feelings of nature, had never cowered beneath the iron rod to which his faith subjected him. He hated

the *creed* of Rome, because, for several centuries, it had held up his nation to the scorn of Christendom, but he neither hated nor feared its professors. He saw, that as knowledge diffused itself, the doctrine of Wickliffe, or something resembling it, would be generally adopted; and he felt assured, that when liberty of conscience was extended to Christians, it could no longer be withheld from his own brethren. With this prospect before him, and perhaps incited further by prejudice, he seized every opportunity of ridiculing the priesthood, foreseeing, that if they were divested of the awful attributes which they arrogated to themselves, or if their pretensions were once questioned, they would soon fall into contempt. But, sensible of the punishment to which he would otherwise lay himself open, he had hitherto proceeded with the most vigilant circumspection; and even now, when detection seemed inevitable, and the stake and gallows rose before him, his presence of mind remained unshaken.

"What ails you, gaffer?" he asked of the watchman, as the latter, seizing Dick by the arm, commanded him to open the bundle.

"Nothing your craft can heal, Sir Pottingar," replied the watchman.

"Nay, how knowest thou that?" said the Jew, laying his brawny hand on the watchman's arm.

The watchman shrank back in terror, and, hastily crossed himself. "Would'st lay a spell on me, Sir Jew?" he cried. "Would'st fraud the king's highness of his customs? Would'st maltreat me?"

Dick, though he did not exactly comprehend wherefore, saw that the Jew had no desire to have the bundle examined; and he therefore made up his mind that, if an opportunity occurred, it would be advisable to take to flight. Accordingly, while the Jew and the watchman were in parley, he dodged under the arm of the latter, and dashed up the street. The watchman, after giving one shout to alarm his colleagues, started after him; and the Jew, when two other watchmen issued from the interior, pointed out the fugitive. As they did not suspect the Jew to be concerned, they did not offer to detain him; and, while they joined in the pursuit, he contrived to remove himself beyond their reach.

Dick did not keep his way steadily up the street. He diverged into a narrow court, which led him into another, and thence, turning into a passage that opened into the main street, he again came in sight of his pursuers. He was a long way a-head, however; and, as there was no one in the street to intercept him, met with no interruption. On reaching Cornhill, which was then a market for the sale of corn, he threw himself under an empty waggon which stood in the area, and remained there till his pursuers had passed. He then started for Gracious street, the place where the duke's arms were exposed, and took care to run backwards from

a vicinity which he had not any desire to visit. This was "the faire conduite of sweete water, castellated in the midst of that warde and streete. It was first builded of stone, in the yeere 1282, by Henry Wallis, Maiore of London, to be a prison for night-walkers, and other suspicious persons; and was called the Tunne upon Cornehill, because the same was builded somewhat in the fashion of a Tunne, standing on one end."

In a short time, though he made a considerable *detour*, Dick reached Gracious street, where he found his two confederates. Even the stern features of the Jew, as Dick related the particulars of the chase, relaxed into a smile; and Master Simon laughed long and loud. When he had finished the relation, Master Simon lifted him up to the Jew's shoulders, whence he clambered to the summit of the wall. He crept along to a spot which they specified, and which was immediately above the duke's scutcheon; and, bending over the wall, caught a cord which Master Simon threw to him. As it was quite dark, for the moon had not yet risen, Dick could only see that there was something white at the end of the cord, or, had he known what dangled therefrom, he would not have grappled it with such avidity. He had just driven in a nail which Master Simon had given him for that purpose, and secured the end of the cord thereto, when a casement of the opposite house was thrown open, and a human head protruded itself.

"By the fair city, my roysterers!" cried this interloper, "an ye make not dispatch, ye will see the Tunne before morning."

The head was withdrawn and the casement slammed to. Both Master Simon and the Jew, who just before were congratulating themselves on their success, were greatly disconcerted by this interruption.

"Haste thee, Dickon," cried the mercer. "Let down thy feet on Master Salmon's shoulders, and we will make our way good yet."

But Dick, with the view of facilitating their retreat, sprang at once to the ground. He fell prostrate on reaching it, and, on raising him up, the Jew discovered that he had sprained his ankle.

"Place him upon my back," said Master Simon.

The Jew attempted to lift him up, but, before he could raise him, three armed men rushed from the opposite house, and he and Master Simon stood on their defence.

CHAPTER VIII. THE CAVALIER.

UNFOLDS WHAT FURTHER BEFEL IN GRACIOUS STREET, AND WHAT HAPPENED DICK AFTER.

"GRAMERCY, my masters!" cried one who carried an ignited torch, and who was the foremost and leader of the intruders, "here have we your Lancastrians and your heretics disturbing God's peace and the king's at midnight."

"And mocking at Holy Church, too," said one of his fellows.

"By the mass!" added the third, "it shall go hard with them."

"Off with ye, ye Roman curs!" cried Master Simon, striking at the last speaker with his rapier.

"Ye shall eat yon dead dog before ye go," said the leader of the Romanists.

"And ye be for a brawl, good citizens," cried the Jew, who seemed to maintain his usual evenness of temper, "I will be one with ye."

The mediciner, suiting his conduct to this declaration, immediately assailed the most formidable of the Romanists, and knocked the torch out of his hand; and Master Simon, though, as he afterwards affirmed, he had not much knowledge of his weapon, manfully supported his friend by attacking the other two. Dick, who was now aware that the dead dog which he had suspended from the top of the wall, and which the flambeau borne by the enemy had revealed to him, was dressed in the surplice of the priesthood, determined to cut it down, as he thought that, if this were done, he would not only atone for the offence which he had unwittingly committed, but also pacify the enraged Romanists. He was not able, however, to effect this object, for having with great pain raised himself to his feet, he found that the patibulary animal was considerably above his reach. He therefore resumed his seat on the ground, and, having repeated two or three *Aves*, waited the issue of the combat.

The Romanists, so far as Dick could judge, seemed likely to come off second best. The Jew had already disarmed their leader, who lay groaning and bleeding on the ground, and the numerical force of the combatants was therefore equal. The clashing of their weapons, however, began to arouse the adjacent denizens; and casement after casement was thrown open, and head after head protruded, to inquire the meaning of such an uproar.

"Help for our Lady and the fair city!" cried the Romanists.

"God for Lancaster!" shouted the Jew.

As the last war-cry was uttered, the Jew struck down his antagonist.

"Ho! watch there!" vociferated the spectators. "Watch! Watch there!"

Three watchmen were seen coming at full speed down the street; and Master Simon and the Jew, as they disarmed the last of their opponents, determined to retreat in the opposite direction. A loud shout, however, warned them therefrom; and, while they hesitated which course to take, a young cavalier and his attendant, grasping their naked weapons in their hands, dashed up the street.

"Lancaster! Lancaster! Who cries for Lancaster?" said the cavalier.

"That do we, Master Henry," replied the Jew. "Ah, Hubert!" he added, slapping the back of the cavalier's attendant with the flat part of his sword, "is it for Lancaster?"

"Death for Lancaster!" shouted his trio of followers; and the watchmen, having looked on them for a moment, turned on their heels, and ran away.

"There will be help here anon," said the Jew, "so take thou up the boy, Sir Racket, and we will homewards."

"And we will back to our watch at the Tower Real," said the cavalier to Hubert.

"Is the baron with the dame to-night, then?" asked the Jew.

"She hath a great revel," replied the cavalier; "and, if he be not there, his plot must have failed."

"He is there," said the mediciner; "but, not the less, his plot will fail. Mark me! The ship is ready for sea, and, if Sir Alfred leave not the dame's bower till morn, it must sail speedily."

"That must it," replied the cavalier, "and, as we must to our watch, I bid good betide ye."

"Nay, one word more," whispered the Jew. "Saw you the earl's daughter to-night?"

If the least glimpse of light had prevailed, the colour which mounted to the cavalier's face would have been visible to the whole party; but as it was not so ordained, and the shades of night completely obscured his floridity, the Jew only was sensible of his confusion.

"What boots it to thee, Sir Jew?" he muttered.

But the Jew had turned away; and having placed Dick on Master Simon's back, and bade the cavalier and Hubert "God speed," he proceeded with Master Simon and Dick towards Leadenhall street.

Just, however, as they reached Long-Bourne—a streamlet which is now covered over, and which gives name to the ward of Langbourne—they heard the voices of a party approaching; and, on turning the angle of Gracious street, they were confronted by several watchmen. The Jew and Master Simon immediately

took to their heels, and, though the watchmen were taken by surprise, were as speedily pursued.

"Follow me!" cried the mediciner to Master Simon.

And, as well as he could, Master Simon did follow. He could, indeed, have been easily overtaken by the watch, but those functionaries seemed to be stricken with some sudden panic, for before any vigorous measures were taken to arrest their steps, the Jew and Master Simon had darted into a dark court. They had scarcely entered, however, when the watch came up, and, pausing at the entrance, conferred on the advisability of proceeding further.

"Our Lady be about us!" said one, "for I ween that one of them is the devil."

"Zooks, Sir Headborough!" stammered another, who appeared to be dreadfully alarmed at the possibility of such a contingency, "shall I go bring a priest?"

"I'll swear you I saw his tail," cried a third, "though he wears a long black gown to hide it. And the other one carries two heads on his back. I saw 'em dodging about."

"By Sancte George!" said the headborough, "the place smells strongly of sulphur. 'Twould be madness to enter the dark court without a torch, for who knows but Satan may pass out in the shape of a black cat?"

"Ay, or trip us up in the disguise of a wisp of straw?" observed another.

"I will back to the Tun," rejoined the headborough, "and get us some torches. We will then enter in a body."

But this proceeding would not be tolerated by any of the party. Each individual protested that he was the greatest sinner in the world; and that, being so, and being, moreover, unacquainted with the Latin tongue—which, in their opinion, was the only orthodox protection against Satan—he was the person best qualified to go for the torches. The headborough, therefore, was obliged to march the whole of them back with him; and not a few of them hoped that, before they returned, the devil would escape.

Without speaking a single word, without indulging in one solitary smile, or displaying any other indication of pleasure or satisfaction, without so much as intimating his wishes to Master Simon by sign or motion of any kind, the Jew, directly the watch had retired, strode forth from an angle of the court in which he had concealed himself, and emerged into the street. Master Simon followed, and, maintaining the same silence, they hastened forwards to Leadenhall street. The merchant's house, however, was closed; and Master Simon, after promising to make his peace with the cook in the morning, persuaded Dick to go home with him. Accordingly the matter was so settled; and, having parted with the Jew within Aldgate, they entered Master Simon's lodging.

CHAPTER IX. THE CONSPIRACY.

INTRODUCES THE READER TO THE TOWER ROYAL, ITS KITCHEN AND ITS GARDEN—RELATES HOW DAME ALICE PERRERS AND SIR ALFRED SINCLAIR CONSPIRED AGAINST MASTER COBBS, AND HOW THE CONSPIRACY WAS DISCOVERED BY DICK WHITTINGTON.

THE clock struck the sixth hour as Master Simon, followed by Dick, presented himself at the door of Master Fitzwarren's residence. They were admitted by the cook, who, directly she beheld Dick, seized him by the collar of his gaberdine, for the purpose, as she afterwards declared, of remonstrating with him on the impropriety of absenting himself all night; but Master Simon, having first delivered him from her clutches, persuaded her to overlook his misconduct. This affair being amicably settled, Master Simon withdrew, leaving Dick and Dame Williams to pursue their respective avocations.

In order to atone for his late error, which the cook represented as a most grievous breach of decorum, Dick laboured throughout the day with additional diligence; and till the hour of sunset, when he had waded through the drudgery of his office, afforded the dame no excuse for the exercise of her untiring loquacity. But when, at the hour aforementioned, he solicited her permission to go abroad, as he was anxious to repair to the domain of the dark-eyed Miriam, the decorous matron answered him by applying a cudgel across his shoulders. In this laudable pursuit she was interrupted by the entrance of Master Simon, who, forgetting that forbearance which should always be shown to the tender sex, hastily and indelicately seized her by the waist, and threw her to the opposite end of the kitchen. The cry of utter amazement and mortification which this ungallant conduct elicited from the dame, who instantly, but with ill-directed aim, hurled a porringer at Master Simon's head, brought Mistress Alice Fitzwarren to the kitchen; and, though the appearance of this young lady checked further hostilities, they still bore towards each other a sour and lowering aspect.

"What for, Master Simon Racket," said Mistress Alice, who partly guessed, from the emotion which he manifested, that Dick was the only sufferer from the late engagement, "tell me what for, sir, is this unseemly riot in my father's house? And, good

dame," she added, addressing the cook, "how has yon poor orphan again offended you?"

It is a beautiful thing to see the flush of excitement on a beautiful cheek, and still more lovely to see it animate a lovely eye; and when such a figure as that of Mistress Alice, with the bosom proudly swelling in the consciousness of right, presents itself before you, it would be a dauntless but an unmanly heart that could remain unmoved. If, however, either Master Simon or Dame Williams had been thus inflexible, they knew that they were both subject to the authority of Mistress Alice, and that they dare not transgress her orders; and consequently, refraining from further hostility to each other, they prepared to answer the inquiries which she had made of them. Master Simon, pointing to Dick, intimated that he was the innocent cause of the disturbance, and explained how far he had himself been concerned; and Mistress Alice seemed, by a smile which played about her pretty mouth, to be no way displeased at his want of gallantry towards the cook. The latter person, scarcely waiting the completion of Master Simon's story, accused him of being a night-walker, in pursuance of which profession, she said, he had seduced Dick to join him the whole of the preceding night.

"I wot right well," replied Mistress Alice, smiling at the dame's impatience, "that Simon Racket, or Racketty Simon, as my father designs him, is one of the wildest gallants in the city; but he would not wrong the widow or the orphan, and so Dickon can take no harm in such fair company. Away with you, then," she added, turning to Dick; "and I pray God speed you, and keep you in the right path."

Dick did not speak, but he bowed his thanks; and, leaving Master Simon to overtake him, set forth on his way to the mediciner's abode.

Before he reached Aldgate, where he feared that he would be recognised as a delinquent by the watch, he was joined by Master Simon, who, calling the guardian of the gate aside, induced him to overlook the offence which Dick had committed on the previous evening. They then proceeded to the Jew's domicile, which they entered; and while Master Simon conversed apart with the Jew, who received them both with a hearty welcome, Dick attended to the instructions of the gentle Miriam. After they had remained there about an hour, however, Master Simon rose to depart; and, as he importuned him to do so, Dick accompanied him.

"Dost know, Dickon," said Master Simon, when, after passing through Aldgate, they bent their steps towards Gracious street—"dost know, Dickon, whither I am going to lead thee?"

"That do I not," replied Dick.

"We are going, then, to the Tower Real," rejoined Master

Simon, "where, as I have told you already, dwell Dame Alice Perrers and my bonny leman, Mistress Eleanor Price."

"I am right glad of it," returned Dick, "and thank you for your courtesy, fair sir."

"Nay, but I take you not a-wooing," said Master Simon. "There is one there—a gentleman and knight—who is plotting the ruin of Master Cobbs. The Jew mediciner, by some means that he will not disclose, has intelligence that this person is to meet Dame Alice to-night, in a place which I will advise you of. There must you deposit yourself in ambuscade, and for the sake of a noble friend, play the part of an eaves-dropper. Wilt undertake it?"

"Right willingly," replied Dick.

"We will incontinently thither, then," rejoined Master Simon; and hurrying down Cornhill, they passed, by the Long-bourne, into Gracious street, whence they repaired to the Tower Royal.

Dick cast a hasty glance at the stern, rugged old edifice, that had braved assaults to which the Tower of London itself had been obliged to yield; but Master Simon gave him no time to institute a rigid inspection, for having led him through a postern in a wall of uncommon thickness, he inducted him at once to the Tower kitchen.

This apartment varied little in its disposition from the same room in the dwelling of Master Fitzwarren, except that, as it had originally been constructed for the convenience of Royalty, every arrangement was on a more extensive scale, and the windows in their deep embrasures, and the roof of broad square stones, had not the air of neatness and comfort which characterised the reticulated casements and boarded ceilings of plebeian kitchens.

Mistress Eleanor Price, whom they observed sitting in the angle most distant from the fire, was labouring at her spinning-wheel when they entered the kitchen; and, on seeing Master Simon and Dick, beckoned them to a settle beside her.

"I have much to tell you," she said to Master Simon, "but," she added, looking at Dick, "time and place suit not."

"The boy is true as gold," said Master Simon, "but he cares not to hear our converse; and so, fair Mistress, if you will guide us to the garden, he can remain there, and we will return."

"So be it, then," replied Eleanor; and gliding through a narrow door and passage at the other end of the kitchen, she led the way to the garden.

"You will see an arbour, Dick," whispered Master Simon, "in the walk on the right-hand. Thither haste thee, and hide thyself in the thick-set, for the hour of thy vigil approaches."

The passage led them out to a small parterre of grass, encircled by closely-planted shrubs, through which, while Master Simon attracted Eleanor's attention elsewhere, Dick contrived to creep into the outer garden. He then paused to consider which route

he would take, and perceiving the arbour that Master Simon had specified, he instantly made for it, taking care, however, as he was fearful of being discovered, to keep within a shrubbery that stretched along on one side of the walk. He ensconced himself as close to the arbour as circumstances rendered prudent; and pulling his hood above his ears, so that he might catch the slightest sound, awaited the coming of the conspirators.

He had been thus ambushed for about half-an-hour, and, from the painful position which he was obliged to maintain, was becoming fatigued, when, not without a sensation of fear, he heard the fall of footsteps in the adjoining walk. These, as he perceived through the bush, announced the approach of a handsome and courtly cavalier, whose features immediately reminded him of those of Master Cobbs, and who was walking by the side of a lady of surpassing beauty. They passed close to the spot where he was concealed, and entered the arbour; but they conversed in so low a tone, that though he was within two yards of where they sat, he did not overhear a syllable. Determined to run some hazard, and perhaps urged forwards by an indiscreet but puerile curiosity, Dick crept with great circumspection from his place of concealment, and crawled along to the side of the arbour. This latter, which had been constructed by the martial Edward in one of his lighter moods, was almost entirely formed by trees, between which was raised trellis work of wood, supporting the wild convolvulus and gentle honeysuckle; and consequently, if watched by a vigilant and wary eye, it afforded but slight screen to an eaves-dropper. So softly, however, did Dick move forwards, and so intent on their discourse were the persons within, that he attained the back of the arbour without being discovered; and laying himself down on the ground, and raising his ear to the arbour, he succeeded in overhearing a part of the conversation.

"I was once inclined to favour him," said the lady, "but the proud traitor disdained my advances."

"I will be surety for him, Dame Alice," returned the cavalier, "that your beauty, all-conquering as it is, and swaying, as it does, the hearts of kings and princes as well as mine, made no impression on his vulgar mind. By my knightly troth—and she were not the mother of me—I would swear that his dam had played my sire false, so near does he approach to the degree of a churl."

"You might hazard such suspicion safely," replied the lady. "But are you assured that we have the fish in our net now, Sir Alfred?"

"I trow yes," rejoined the cavalier. "I have watched him myself these two past days, and I cannot be mistaken. I have traced him from a house in Leadenhall street, belonging to one Fitzwarren, a merchant, to a house beyond Aldgate, appertaining,

as you may know, to the Jew mediciner; but though I have endeavoured to follow him closely, and have set a good watch on him, I cannot discover whither he goes thence."

"Haply, then, he may slip our toils yet?"

"Not so," returned Sir Alfred. "I was close in his wake last night, as, muffled in a long cloak, he parted with the churl Fitzwarren at Aldgate; and I heard him appoint to-morrow night, at the eighth hour, as a time for meeting at Fitzwarren's house. If I had the king's warrant, now that the city's charter is withdrawn, I could post a party of my vassals in the street, and apprehend him as he emerged from the house."

"That were the duty of Sir Henry Percy, the Marshal of England," replied the lady; "but I will settle that, and thou shalt have the warrant to-morrow. Sir Henry Ball, who was truly a chivalrous knight, and who had good excuse for seeking home, was beheaded for leaving the king's standard without licence; and who is this churl, who disdains the love of noble ladies for the embrace of peasant sluts, that he should be absolved! Spoke you to the Jew mediciner concerning him?"

"I did, noble lady," rejoined the cavalier; "but I gleaned nothing from him. I would be surety, before my Lord Archbishop, that the Jew is a damned magician, and would fain conceal his knowledge of my worshipful brother."

"Now, so help me God!" said the lady, in a tone which startled the cavalier, "so villanous a tongue as thine would not weigh one feather against the Jew. What, sir, if I look to gratify my own passion, which thy caittiff brother hath provoked, by aiding thee in this matter, and at the same time bringing to justice a disloyal traitor, dost thou think, in the profundity of thy policy, that I believe a word that escapes thee? The warrant, as I have promised, thou shalt have; but for the Jew, look you that he meets no harm."

Dick thought that he had now heard enough, and that it would be most prudent to effect a retreat before the inmates of the arbour retired, as, on rising, they would probably detect some part of his person, which was only invisible while their backs were turned towards him. Accordingly, with tremulous caution, and hand after hand and foot after foot, he receded to his original station, restraining even his breath, which lay like a weight on his breast, lest its natural emission should betray him. He had, indeed, good cause for such fears, for if either of the occupants of the arbour had altered their position, or if their attention had been attracted by the slightest noise, he would certainly have been discovered. His good fortune, however, as well as his good sense, carried him beyond peril; and when he reached the shrubbery that had first afforded him concealment, and drew a long deep respiration, he raised his eyes and hands to heaven in speechless gratitude.

After resting a moment, which sufficed him to reconnoitre, he commenced his retreat towards the Tower; and having attained the enclosed plat of grass which has been before described, and assured himself that there was no one to overlook his movements, he crept through into the passage beyond. Thence, with recovered firmness, he walked leisurely into the kitchen.

The party in the kitchen had been augmented during the period of his absence, and, under cover of the general hilarity, he entered without being observed. He perceived Master Simon sitting by the side of Mistress Eleanor in the further angle, and from the blush which overspread the face of the latter person, as she plied assiduously at her spinning-wheel, Dick rightly opined that his friend was prosecuting his love-suit. A third person, whom Dick instantly recognised as the Robinhood of the rustic Mayings, sat on an adjacent settle, and was evidently displeased at the familiarity and good-feeling which appeared to subsist between the two lovers. By the fire-place stood a gaunt falconer, who was making love to the robust cook, who, lady-like, let the spit stand still while she listened to his soft persuasion; and on a settle by the door, between two lasses of equal personal merit, sat a young archer, who probably belonged to the garrison.

"My sooth to a minstrel's lay," said one of the last-mentioned damsels, "if yon steward be not listening to Mistress Eleanor's converse!"

This offer of a wager, and one, too, which staked such long odds, directed the attention of the whole party to the steward, who, no way abashed, openly acknowledged his guilt.

"And wherefore, Sir Steward," said Master Simon, starting up, "wherefore do you presume on such incivilities?"

"Come, Sir Citizen," cried the gaunt falconer, "hold thee thy peace! Bodikins! would you raise a brawl in the Tower Real?"

"Nay," observed the cook, who, as it was natural that a lady should do, considered eaves-dropping in the course of a love-suit an unpardonable offence, "hold thee thy peace, Sir Falconer! I ween I have knowledge of Master Simon Racket, as a fair-meaning and orderly citizen, and a faithful bachelor to Mistress Eleanor, for two good years. So hold thee thy peace, Sir Falconer, and you be wise! I warrant me, now, thou would'st like to force me to wed thee, even as our steward would force Mistress Eleanor."

The avowal of such an opinion on the part of the cook, notwithstanding that it elicited a fervent protestation of innocence from the falconer, occasioned an argument between the two young damsels and the archer, who endeavoured, but unsuccessfully, to demonstrate the sincerity of his own intentions. Being, however, succoured by a brave-looking page, who relieved him of one of the ladies, and the whole party perceiving that the falconer had made up matters with the cook, he came off victorious. In the

meantime, seemingly dissatisfied at the good-humour which prevailed, and which he had thought to overthrow, the steward skulked away, and Master Simon was left in the undisturbed enjoyment of Mistress Eleanor's society.

"By the mass, my rovers!" said the page, as the bells of the neighbouring churches began a solemn chime, "it is near the couver-feu. We must break up our merry-meeting, I ween."

"Let us have one song from you citizen, then?" cried his fair partner, "and we will bid him farewell."

"Thou speakest wisely," said the cook. "So ho, Master Simon!" she added, "let us hear thy chirp!"

Master Simon, of course, professed his utter inability to comply with this flattering request, for as he knew that all strangers must withdraw from the Tower by curfew, when it was closed for the night, he was anxious to pass the intervening moments in a more agreeable pursuit; but eventually, on the intercession of Mistress Eleanor, he delivered himself of this rude lay:—

The Rose of England.

Of all the flow'rs that ever bloom,
 Prefer me to the rose,
 For beauty wears it as a plume
 Where guile did ne'er repose;
 And when the morning sun doth rise,
 And matins the foresters solemnize,
 There are pearls on its bosom, and pearls in its eyes:
 Then the rose of England! the red, red rose!
 We'll drink to the health of the bonny red rose!

When English gallant grasps his brand,
 And forth to battle goes,
 His cap declares his native land,
 For there he dons the rose.
 Then fill, sirs, fill, sirs, to the brim,
 Till wine gurgle over the goblet's rim,
 Choose we this for the burden, the sum of our hymn,
 The red rose of England! the red, red rose!
 We'll drink to the health of the bonny red rose!

The song was pronounced to be good, and the singer's ability passing excellent; and owing perhaps to the intoxication which applause always produces, or, it may be, led away by the feelings which poetry inspires, Master Simon so far outraged popular decorum, and, at the same time, the etiquette which governs matters of love, as to snatch a kiss from the lips of Mistress Eleanor, who was very wrath thereat, because, as the other two damsels averred, it set a bad example to their pert bachelors, who immediately subjected them to the same barbarous treatment. Probably the gaunt falconer, who was an eye-witness of this

transaction, did not think it a sufficient warrant for a similar assault upon the cook, or perhaps his passion, which approximated to cupboard love, was not so ardent as that of the other lovers, for he only muttered something about the briskness of young blood, which remark, instead of conciliating his mistress, provoked her to reply, that she liked the briskness of young blood best. The other ladies, however, recovered their good-humour in a moment; and Master Simon and Dick, having taken leave of them separately, sallied forth into the street.

As they proceeded towards Leaden Hall street, whither Master Simon at first proposed to accompany Dick, the latter acquainted him with the particulars which he had overheard in his ambush at the arbour; and these he thought so important, that, quitting Dick at the corner of Gracious street, he hastened to impart them to the party concerned. Dick, in a thoughtful mood, pursued his way homewards; and now, for the first time, he began to suspect the real rank of Master Cobbs; and, from what he had overheard from the Jew and the young cavalier on the preceding night, he was convinced that there existed some connection between the latter person and the mysterious mariner.

As he entered his employer's house, he bethought him of his cat; and descending to the kitchen, he purveyed its supper. He then reported himself to Dame Williams, who commanded him to go to bed, and he accordingly ascended to his garret.

Having fed his cat, which he then left at large in the room, and performed his devotions, he threw himself on his hard bed; and, oppressed with the lassitude which follows a laborious day, fell asleep. He was soon, however, awakened by a loud scream, which, on turning his eyes in the direction of the noise, and seeing the bright eyes of his cat glare through the darkness, he found to emanate from a monstrous rat, which the guardian of his chamber had just captured. Rejoicing at her efficiency, Dick turned round on his other side, and before he could mutter an *Ave*, resumed his slumbers.

CHAPTER X. THE VENTURE.

HOW DICK WHITTINGTON PARTED WITH HIS CAT—HOW HE VISITED LEADEN HALL—HOW MASTER COBBS WAS WAYLAID BY SIR ALFRED SINCLAIR—HOW THE JEW MEDICINER BROUGHT HIM OFF BY A STRATAGEM.

ON the next evening, to the no small surprise of Dick, the house of Master Fitzwarren was the scene of unusual bustle, unusual, at least, inasmuch as it was of rare occurrence; for, except on the eve of some momentous enterprise, all matters in his dominion, whether mercantile or domestic, were conducted with monotonous regularity. But the present occasion, as Dick soon discovered, was sufficiently out of the common course of events to excuse the excitement which prevailed in the merchant's family. The ship 'Unicorn,' in which he had stowed a valuable cargo, was to sail at the morrow's dawn for the coast of Morocco, and with the characteristic liberality of a merchant of that period, Master Fitzwarren had assembled, at his house in Leadenhall street, all those in his employment who wished to send a small venture in the argosy. Whilst the company, who were assembled in the hall, were anxiously awaiting the advent of Master Cobbs, of whom nothing had been seen or heard during the two previous days, Dick, who had been summoned to appear with the others, looked round in search of Master Simon Racket, but that individual, he perceived, was not present. Apprehensive that some accident had prevented his friend from disclosing to the mariner the conspiracy which had been formed against him, and which, if he were not informed of its existence, would assuredly succeed, Dick sprang forwards with the intention of unfolding it to Master Fitzwarren; but a moment's reflection convinced him that, as he did not know wherefore the mariner incurred such danger, and his real rank might be unknown to Fitzwarren, any disclosure which could be made by him would be of no avail. His movement, however, and his apparent emotion, attracted the notice of every eye; and Mistress Alice, who had been watching him intently for several moments, crossed over to him, and inquired the cause of his discomposure. Dick was overwhelmed with confusion, and this circumstance increased the curiosity of Mistress Alice; but as he was determined not to divulge, even to her, a matter of such vast importance, he excused himself by complaining of

head-ache. Though she was satisfied that this was not the case, and anxious to ascertain the positive cause, Mistress Alice did not press him further; and Dick thought, as she turned away from him, that her eyes upbraided him for his want of confidence. Nevertheless, he resolved to preserve his secret inviolate; and before he could rescind this resolution, a loud summons at the door, which was immediately opened, introduced the anxiously-expected Cobbs.

Dick immediately stepped forwards, in the hope of attracting his attention, and thus obtaining an audience; but the mariner's manner was so stern and commanding, and he was himself so fearful of rebuke, that he determined to wait a more favourable opportunity.

"You are right welcome, Master Cobbs," cried the merchant, rising from his seat as the mariner entered. "We have tarried your coming impatiently."

"Then we will haste to business, Sir Merchant," replied the other, "for I have that to settle with you will keep me here till late."

"Thank God!" muttered Dick, who had retired to the furthest corner of the hall.

"'Twas of him you were speculating, then?" observed a voice beside him.

Dick looked up, and beheld Mistress Alice, who had overheard his exclamation, and who, before he could reply, crossed over to her father's chair.

"Stand forth, gallants, and present your ventures," cried Master Fitzwarren to his servants.

Accordingly, each individual advanced with his separate parcel, and having presented it for inspection, and seen it duly entered in the invoice by Master Fitzwarren, commended it to the care of Providence, and retired. The parcels were then handed over to two sailors, who had entered the hall with Master Cobbs, and who, when they were all collected, were to transport the several ventures to the ship.

"Where is Master Simon Racket?" asked the merchant, looking round the hall, which was now cleared of all the servants except Dick. "I have not seen him since yester-night."

"He was seeking Master Cobbs this morning," replied Mistress Alice, "on business, he said, of great moment; and he bade me tell you he must not rest till he had found him."

"Ah!" muttered the mariner.

"Well, there is one other adventurer yet," observed the merchant. "Stand you forth, young Whittington," he continued, addressing Dick. "What do you purpose sending to the Moor?"

"I have nothing, your worship," replied Dick, stepping forward.

"Nay, but I will present something for you," said Mistress Alice.

"That cannot be," resumed the merchant. "He must furnish his own venture. Can you afford nothing soever?"

"Nothing, your worship," returned Dick. "I have nothing in the world but a cat."

His three auditors smiled, and Dick, thinking that he had provoked their ridicule, hastened to set the matter in another light.

"And that, your worship, though it would be a paltry venture, I would be loth to part with, for besides ridding me of some troublesome visitors, it hath shown a sort of fondness for me; and friends, even though they be dumb, are not to be cast off."

"Thou speakest sooth," said the merchant.

"But he hath other friends," muttered Mistress Alice, "though he distrusts them."

Dick, for whose ear alone this observation was intended, felt his cheek burn, but he reproached his fair accuser neither by look nor word.

"Bring thy cat hither, Dickon," cried Master Cobbs. "I will take it to the Moor, and I hope, for thy sake, that the venture will prosper."

Dick made a low bow, and, quitting the hall, ascended to his garret. He took the cat in his arms, and bade her farewell as he would a cherished friend; and with a tear in his eye, and a heart quivering with emotion, he transported her to the hall. The cat was given into the custody of the sailors, who instantly departed; and Dick, having obtained leave to go abroad, started immediately for the Jew's house.

He had no doubt, as he hastened towards Aldgate, that he would there learn some tidings of Master Simon; and, at all events, as he knew that the mediciner was a confidant of Cobbs, he could reveal to him the communication which he would rather have made to that individual himself. It was now dusk, and though he saw a group of persons, muffled in cloaks, standing opposite to his master's residence, and had no doubt but that they were the party from whom hostility was to be expected, he could not, without crossing over to them, clearly ascertain their intentions. He thought it prudent, therefore, to push on to the Jew's habitation, which he soon reached; and, knocking loudly at the door, was hailed from within by Miriam.

"Open the door, my mistress!" replied Dick, in answer to her inquiry of "Who knocks?"

"The God of Israel shield us!" said the dark-eyed damsel, as, pale and panting, Dick pushed past her into the passage. "What hath happened?"

"Where is your father?" cried Dick.

"He is abroad," returned the damsel. "He sallied forth with

Simon betimes this morning, and, as I ween, has gone in search of Master Cobbs."

"Then is Master Cobbs undone," said Dick, passing both his hands over his face.

"Why for?" asked Miriam, as she caught hold of his right hand, and pulled it from his face. "Why for, Dickon?"

"That I must haste back to tell him," replied Dick.

"You will not tell me, then?" said Miriam, throwing her arm round his neck to detain him, and peering her beautiful dark eyes into his face. "You mistrust me, do you?"

Dick hesitated; and Miriam's flashing eyes, which were beginning to assume a sulky expression, suddenly brightened.

"Go to, you simpl' one!" she cried, playfully throwing down his hand. "I know more of this matter than is known to you. Is the danger imminent?"

"It is, my mistress," said Dick.

"Then hie you to Leaden Hall," rejoined Miriam. "Speak no word, and present no token; but search out Master Henry, the young cavalier, and tell him what you know."

"I pray God betide you," cried Dick, turning to depart.

"God speed you!" said the Hebrew maiden.

She threw open the door, and Dick darted out.

He paused not a moment till he reached Leaden Hall. He knocked loudly at the door, which was instantly opened, but, on expressing his wish to see Master Henry, the porter denied him admittance.

"For the sake of our Lady," cried Dick, throwing himself on his knees, "deny me not! And you do deny me, look you to it; for life and death depend on my seeing him."

The porter hesitated. "You will find him in the garden," he said, at length; and, taking Dick by the shoulder, he directed him to an open door at the opposite end of the hall.

Gliding out of the door, and descending a flight of steps into the garden, Dick pursued his way down the middle walk, which ran a considerable distance, without meeting the person of whom he was in search; but when he reached the termination of this walk, and turned thence into one more narrow in its dimensions, he observed a small arbour, in which, as the music of the duleimer issued from the interior, he doubted not but the cavalier was located. Thither he accordingly repaired, and, as he approached it, the music ceased, and the notes of a man's voice struck on his ear.

The night was one of those which the poet has called "daylight sick." The dark sky was thickly studded with stars, which shed a faint lustre over the drapery of heaven, and the young moon, like a crescent or cincture of silver, seemed to fasten the embroidered canopy to the world's roof. The day had been warm, warm for the season, but a sweet breeze, just sufficient to arouse the

nightingale, "had risen at the vesper time," and it played on Dick's warm cheek, and rustled over the fainting flowers, like a gentle spirit, that bringeth love to man. And love, unquestionably, is the offspring of such bright hours. "Beware," says a great writer, addressing the softer sex, "beware of the Ides of May!" but May, throughout, is a gay and wanton month.

As Dick advanced towards the arbour, slowly, indeed, but not stealthily, he perceived that its two inmates, who were very pleasantly employed, were not aware of his vicinity. A young man, whom he knew for the cavalier, was kneeling at the feet of a young lady, of whom Dick knew nothing whatever; but he presumed, as she appeared to be the mistress of the cavalier's heart, that she was fair, and, as a matter of course, good. Leaving his hypothesis for confirmation or refutation thereafter, he gave a slight cough, which elicited a scream from the lady, an oath from the cavalier, and broke the spell of one of the most charming love-scenes that the chronicler could have recorded.

Recovering, in some measure, from the consternation which Dick's sudden appearance had created, the two lovers, in different tones, inquired his business.

"My business, most fair lady," replied Dick, "is with Master Henry only."

"Then prithee, good my boy," said Master Henry, "take thou this coin for thy recompense, and return to-morrow."

"And Master Cobbs," began Dick—

"Ah!" exclaimed the young chevalier, "say you? Your errand, quick, quick, boy!"

Dick stepped aside from the arbour, and, in a few words and a low tone of voice, acquainted the cavalier with the situation of his parent.

Brief as was this recital, the cavalier scarcely waited its completion. "Adieu, sweet lady!" he cried, and bidding Dick follow, darted towards the house.

"Ho! ho! for some brave hearts!" he shouted, as he entered the hall; and before he ceased speaking, Hubert Cromwell confronted him. "Hubert," said the cavalier, "help for the mariner's life! Lances and masks, my Hubert!"

"Lances are here in plenty," replied Hubert, beckoning four men forwards, "and masks can be soon procured. Do off your surcoats," he added, addressing the men at arms, "for they show the Fauntun crest."

He quitted the hall, and in a few moments, which the others employed in equipping themselves, he returned with some black masks. In these the whole party, except himself and the cavalier, concealed their faces; and those two persons having drawn down their hoods, which thus answered the purpose of masks, they sallied into the street. Just as they attained the street, the clash

of weapons, at a little distance, announced the commencement of the struggle.

"God's Son!" exclaimed the cavalier, "they are at it!"

As the party darted forwards, they perceived Master Cobbs, assisted by two others, whom Dick soon discovered to be Master Simon and the Jew, contending with half-a-dozen armed men, who, at the critical moment of their appearance, had nearly achieved their capture.

"Sanctuary! Rescue! Now, my hearts, for your ladies' sakes!" were the several cries of Master Henry's followers, as, dashing impetuously forwards, they bore up to the side of Master Cobbs.

"Lancaster and the king!" cried one of the opposing party.

"Who puts Lancaster before the king?" shouted Hubert Cromwell, striking him down.

The battle now began, and would soon have ended in the annihilation of Sir Alfred's party, but the alarms which were raised by the occupants of the adjacent houses, and which were handed along from one to the other, quickly spread to the Tun on Cornhill, from which place a large party of the watch instantly set forth. These came up with the combatants, whom a kind of running fight had drawn towards them, at the corner of Gracious street, where a parley was demanded.

"Wherefore is this brawl?" asked the headborough, who, as several of the citizens had been drawn forth from their houses, and were now, together with the watch, collected round him, was sufficiently strong to intimidate both parties.

"I have the warrant of the Duke of Lancaster," said Sir Alfred Sinclair, "to apprehend a traitor.

"Look you to it, good citizens!" cried the young cavalier, with great earnestness. "Here is a mighty fine pass, I warrant you. Where is your mayor? Where all the immunities of your city—your aldermans, your mareschals, your sheriffs, and your headboroughs? Truly, quotha, I care not for these; I have the presents of him of Lancaster. A mighty fine pass, I warrant you, for our fair city, and one which it behoves your worships to look to, as I will now, so help me Saint Thomas of Canterbury, the good guardian saint of our city!"

"Bravely said, and well!" shouted a score of voices.

"Hold you, my masters!" cried the headborough. "I know not how to act in this matter, which passes my capacity; for whereas, as is known to you all, the mayor only has the power of issuing warrants in our city, yet I bethink me, when the duke sends out his warrant, it must needs be fulfilled, as coming from the king's highness. Peace you, then! and we will examine, if there be any clerks among you, how far this worthy stranger's warrant extends."

"Well spoken!" shouted the citizens.



*The treacherous midnight attack on Dick Whittington's friends
The Jew, Master Cobbs & Racketty Simon.*

"There is my warrant," said Sir Alfred, handing it to the headborough. "What say you to it now?"

"Is there here any cunning scholar who can read you writing?" asked the headborough of the assembly.

"That cannot I," said one voice, and the same answer was repeated by every one present.

"Methought," cried Sir Alfred, "that the Jew mediciner, whom I saw here but now, was a well-read clerk."

Every eye looked round, and, as the torches of the watch diffused a vivid light, every face was distinct—but no Jew, nor mariner, nor Master Simon, was to be seen.

Sir Alfred's eyes flashed fire. "Forwards!" he shouted to his vassals, "the villanous traitor has fled. Forwards, in the name of King Edward! and if these carrion citizens oppose ye, hew them down!"

"Ho you, Sir Headborough!" shouted one of the crowd, "hear you not the citizens abused? Stop this 'fray, I charge you!"

"Nay, if he have the duke's warrant," answered the headborough, "and I think he has so, I meddle not with him."

This declaration greatly offended the citizens, who, however, were soon dispersed by the watch. But Master Henry, the young cavalier, would probably have occasioned those functionaries some trouble, only that, as he was rallying his men to pursue Sir Alfred, he felt his cloak gently pulled behind, and, on turning round, he encountered a significant glance from Hubert Cromwell. The meaning of this he at once understood; and drawing off his men, whom he led home by a round-about way, he quitted the scene of action.

Dick, who had stood by throughout, having witnessed the termination of the affray, and seen what the others did not, the manner of Master Cobbs's retreat, now slipped along in the shadow of the houses to his master's habitation. There were no lights visible through the casements, which seemed to intimate that the inmates had retired to bed, and he determined to proceed to the Jew's residence. It was now nearly eleven o'clock, but Aldgate was not yet closed. Thither he repaired at his full speed, and, meeting no interruption in the way, he soon reached it; and knocking gently at the Jew's door, and giving his name in answer to the usual inquiry, he was admitted by Miriam.

CHAPTER XI. THE DREAM.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE HOUSE OF MASTER SALMON, THE JEW MEDICINER—HOW IT WAS BESIEGED, HOW THE SIEGE WAS RAISED, AND BY WHOM; HOW A CERTAIN HERO, HIGHT DICK WHITTINGTON, BECAME THE KNIGHT OF A LADY FAIR, AND HOW THE SAID LADY DREAMT A DREAM.

As Miriam closed the outer door after him, and the lamp which she carried in her hand, relieved from the agitation of the atmosphere, shed a calm and steady light around, Dick perceived that his arrival had brought a flush of pleasure to her cheeks, which, in that long, dark passage, and that gentle and limited light—in that tranquil moment, when the busy events of the few preceding hours, which had swept like a hurricane over his mind, had left him more open to tender thoughts—in that solitary hour, approaching to midnight, when the spirit, if awake, assumes a more extensive comprehension than at any other time—those olive cheeks, he thought, were more beautiful, more lovely, more holy, and more chaste, nearer akin to his ideas of heavenly perfection, of innocence, and of modesty, than aught he had yet seen beneath the sky. Such a thought, though he was but a simple boy, was not above the capacity of his years, nor, though it was untutored, of his mind.

He held out his hand to take the lamp from her, but she drew it back, and stepped before him.

“How fared you,” she asked, as she ascended to the upper chamber, “how fared you with Master Henry?”

“He is a most courteous gallant,” replied Dick, with an arch smile. “He went with me on the instant, taking half-a-dozen of brave hearts with him; and in sooth ’twas but a timely undertaking. Howbeit, we rescued Master Cobbs; and in the event, by most excellent strategy, your worshipful sire took him off scathless.

“God, he be thanked!” exclaimed Miriam, raising her dark eyes towards heaven. “But hither, Dickon,” she continued, as they reached the chamber, “enter hither, Dickon, and relate how.”

“’Tis a short story,” rejoined Dick, following Miriam into the

room, and taking his seat beside her on a cushion, "and can be soon told. Your sire, fair mistress——"

"I am not fair, Dick," interrupted Miriam.

"What art thou, then?" said Dick. "And you be not fair, and very fair too, there is none fair in the city."

"My sooth!" exclaimed Miriam, smiling, "but you have soon learned the gallant's art. On with thy tale, simplon, or my sire will be here before you begin."

"He will not be here to-night," replied Dick.

"How know you that?" asked Miriam, alarmed.

"Nay," cried Dick, "be not ruffled thereat. He will rest, I think, with Master Cobbs to-night."

"Wilt thou not wait till he comes, then?"

"I will wait till morning, fair mistress," replied Dick, "if it pleasure you to suffer me. I am shut out from my master's, as I tarried to see the fate of Master Cobbs."

"Thou can'st rest in my father's couch, then," said Miriam, "but to thy story."

"When," began Dick, "I brought up Master Henry and his force, your father and Master Simon were fighting by the mariner's side; and but for our arrival, which turned the scale, would soon have been captured. On our coming up, the foe gave way; but the watch being alarmed, and hurrying to the spot, a parley was brought about; and a crowd of citizens, who had been drawn thither by the noise of the fray, mingled with both parties. Master Henry, whom I know for a steadfast Lancastrian, made a speech against the duke, and so angered the citizens against his grace, and against the other cavalier also, that a great noise and bustle followed. Howbeit, I kept my eye on Master Cobbs, and saw your father push him back into Gracious street, and then I saw your father and Master Simon slink after him. They ran down the street like lightning, and as it was very dark, and I was afraid to quit the spot, they were very soon beyond sight."

"But haply they were overtaken?"

"Nay," replied Dick, "that could they not be; for when they were missed from the crowd, the cavalier took another road, thinking they had fled straight onward."

"'Twas a cunning strategy of my father," said Miriam, smiling.

"Most excellent," replied Dick, laughing outright.

"I warrant you," observed Miriam, "they will sleep on ship-board to-night."

"Ay," sighed Dick.

"Wherefore do you sigh, Dickon?"

"I have ventured my all in the ship," replied Dick, "and the sea is a great devourer. Besides, albeit 'twas dear to me as a friend's speech, my venture is not like to turn to good account."

"Wherefore?" asked Miriam.

"'Twas only a cat," rejoined Dick.

Miriam laughed, and before she could explain the cause of her merriment, of which Dick did not seem to approve, both of them were startled by a thundering rap at the outer door.

"'Tis your father," said Dick, as he moved towards the chamber door.

"Nay, nay," whispered Miriam, catching hold of his arm with both her hands, "I know my father's summons. 'Tis some stranger—some one in authority."

"In sooth," replied Dick, "it may be the caitiff——"

A second rap, louder and more prolonged than the first, arrested Dick's speech.

Miriam trembled. She dropped her head on Dick's shoulder, and her beautiful black hair, laying so still over her pale features, floated down on his breast. Her small hands grasped his arm with a nervous yet trembling tenacity. Her bosom, where tranquillity, and love, and purity, were wont to dwell together—he felt its rapid swell and fall, its quivering pulsation, its woman fears appealing to his young right arm. He looked down at her lovely face, and a melancholy reflection flashed across his mind. There he stood in the wide world, which wore so dark and forbidding a front, and there was no star to illuminate his way, no hand to point out a safe path, no lovely lips to smile, no bright eye to beam on the lone and hapless orphan. His mother—she was deep in the cold, damp earth, where he must lay at last, and where the beautiful and the deformed, the virtuous and the depraved, the courageous and the cowardly, made a glorious banquet for the filthy worm. God!—but there were some that loved him; and the sister who leaned on his arm, and whom he prized so dearly—she was among the foremost. As these thoughts, which fled through his mind in a moment's space, recalled his usual evenness of temper, his heart became as calm, nervous, and resolved, as that of a giant.

"Cheer thee up, mistress," he said, as the loud knocking at the door was repeated. "We will inquire the meaning of this to-do."

"Thou'lt stand by me, Dickon?"

"To the death," replied Dick, firmly.

"Then I will not fear," said Miriam, trembling as she spoke. "But you had better hail them, Dick. 'Twill sound better from you than from a girl."

"Ay," rejoined Dick. "Bear thou the light, mistress, and fear nought."

They then descended the stairs, and heard a voice calling on them to open the door.

"What seek ye, gentles?" asked Dick, in a loud and firm tone.

"I charge you, in the name of the king's highness, to open the door," was the reply.

"Nay, that will I not," answered Dick. "His highness hath given you no warrant to use his name; and besides, gentles, it is known to all of ye, or should be known, that a citizen's house can be entered only with its master's license, wherefore, though 'twere a roofless shed, 'tis as strong as the Tower Real."

"Hark you, Sir Youngster," replied the voice, "your argument applies not to traitors. So open the door, in the king's name, or we will straightway force it."

"For that you have no warrant," returned Dick. "There dwell no traitors here, but true lieges, who will defy your utmost. And mark you, Sir Alfred, that the dame who advised with you in the garden yonder, and who dared you to harm a hair of the Jew's head—mark you that she hear not of this."

There was a pause.

"Where is Master Salmon?" asked the voice without.

"He is abroad," replied Dick; "and I pray you begone, or I will ring an alarum, which will soon bring the watch hither."

"Thou art a bold buzzard," returned the other; "and 'tis well for thee there are two inches of oak between us."

"I seek not to provoke you, worthy sir," said Dick. "Thou art welcome to remain without so long as it pleasure you; but prithee, and you value your well-being, tempt me not to alarum the ward. Your force is small, and in a few minutes, without stirring from the spot, I can summon hither a brave power. Moreover, you will remember what was told you by the dame."

"I know not your name," replied the other, "or whence you acquire your knowledge, but you speak good sooth. Prithee open the door, and I will give thee a recompense."

Dick made no answer, but drawing Miriam away from the door, and leading her up the passage, inquired if there was no outlet at the back of the house.

"There is none save yonder casement," replied the damsel, "and that is a few feet above an out-house, whence a man might drop himself into the garden. But what would you?"

"I would I had a small bow and shaft," said Dick. "I would then out of the casement, and alarum the Aldgate watch."

"You will come to harm," returned Miriam, detaining him.

"Nay, you keep them in parley at the door," rejoined Dick. "Have you no small bow and shaft?"

Miriam ascended the stairs, and in a few moments returned with two bows. Dick took the smallest one, and having fitted it with a shaft, and opened the casement which Miriam pointed out, he clambered up to the sill, and stepped down on the roof of the out-house. He crept along the tiles to the verge of the gable, which he grasped firmly with both his hands, and then, when he had let himself down as far as he could, dropped to the ground.

There was still an outer wall to climb before he would be clear of the premises, but as this was no great height, he made a spring

to catch the top with his hands, and though several times foiled in this purpose, he was at last successful. When he had surmounted this difficulty, and descended safely on the other side, where he picked up his bow and shaft, which, previous to climbing over himself, he had thrown over the wall, he moved stealthily along in the shade to Aldgate. On reaching the gate, and turning round to see whether he had been observed, he perceived that there were six persons assembled before the Jew's door, and that they were still kept in parley by Miriam. The postern of Aldgate was not yet closed, and he had therefore no difficulty in alarming the watch, whom he implored to hasten to the mediciner's residence, as it was attacked, he said, by a party of court gallants.

"I bear no good will to the hang-dog Jew," said the chief warder; "but these court gallants be greater plagues than he. Out with you, my hearts," he added, addressing the watch, "and we will examine into this business."

Dick, having seen the watch turn out, retraced his steps with the same caution as he had previously observed, and gained the garden wall, where he proposed to station himself, at the moment that the watchmen began a parley with the besiegers. He drew the string of his bow, fitted the shaft, raised it to his shoulder, and prepared, if it became necessary, to take aim.

"Hilloa you!" cried the warder to Sir Alfred. "What seek you of the pottingar?"

"Neither himself nor his daughter," replied Sir Alfred.—Dick almost suffered the shaft to fly.—"But a degraded knight and traitor, whom we have reason to think he harbours. We have warrant for our dispositions."

"What," answered the warder, "warrant to attack a burgher's house at midnight! Nay, my masters, none of that, and it like you. Prithce take yourselves peaceably off, else ye may rue it."

"You dare not molest us," returned Sir Alfred.

"There you lie!" cried the warder, in a passion. But he had hardly uttered the words, when, raising his unsheathed rapier, Sir Alfred made a pass at his breast. His black-jack, or proof doublet, broke the thrust, and before Sir Alfred could repeat it, a shaft from an unseen hand was lodged in his arm.

A shout from the watchmen recalled his presence of mind to their leader, who seized Sir Alfred by his now powerless arm, and drew him in among the watch.

"I attach thee in the name of King Edward!" said the warder.

"Hold, hound!" cried Sir Alfred. "I am lawfully authorized by the warrant of the king's highness. I have haply exceeded my commission, but while such I hold,"—and he drew the warrant from his breast—"you dare not attach me."

"Does this warrant you to break into the pottingar's house?"





J. & J. Jones fecit 15 Queen St. Cheapside.

*Duke William Champion of the fair Jewess, wounds
Sir Alfred Sinclair.*

asked the warder, who saw that his prisoner was a man of rank, and one of whom he had no wish to make an enemy.

"No," replied Sir Alfred, "but it warrants me to attach a certain traitor whenever and wherever he be found."

"Then, as never a one of us can read," said the warder, "and therefore can judge not a counterfeit from a true writing, it should be carried by my Lord Percy, or by the sheriffs, or by some headborough at the least. So prithee, worshipful sir, draw off your force, or I must hold you in ward till the morrow."

Sir Alfred hesitated. His followers were not near so powerful as the watch, and he was himself wounded and a prisoner. It was probable, too, that the mediciner and Master Cobbs were really abroad; and if this were the case, or even if it were not so, no advantage could accrue from his persisting in the face of the watch. Perhaps, also, as he had molested the Jew, Dame Alice Perrers would withdraw her support—that was a sad reflection indeed.

"I will stay further measures till to-morrow, then," he said at last.

He was suffered to walk back to his own followers, and having been assisted to don his cloak, and to bind his wounded arm tightly with a scarf, he marched towards Aldgate. When, followed by the watch, they passed through the postern, Dick heard it slammed to; and, at the same moment, the clocks of the city chimed the half-hour past eleven.

Dick ran round to the garden-gate, and rapped gently at the mediciner's door.

"Is it you, Dickon?" asked Miriam from within.

"Aye, mistress," replied Dick.

The door was opened, and, directly Dick had entered, was re-closed, bolted, and barred.

"Why, where is your shaft?" asked Miriam, perceiving that Dick held the bow only.

"Flown," answered Dick.

"Gramercy! was it you struck the knight?"

Dick smiled.

"Then shall you be my knight hence," said Miriam, and, flinging her left arm round Dick's neck, while she held the lighted lamp aside with the other, she imprinted a kiss on his lips.

"I will be your brother," said Dick, smiling; and led the way up stairs.

On reaching the upper chamber, Miriam advised Dick to go to bed, and pointed out the apartment in which he was to lodge, and accordingly, having bidden her good night, he retired. The bed on which he threw himself, and which was usually occupied by the mediciner, was so much easier than the one that he generally lodged in, that had he even been less weary than at other times, he would soon have fell asleep; but being so much more

fatigued, he had no sooner laid himself thereon, and repeated his prayers, than his mind bent itself to slumber.

He awoke at dawn, much refreshed, and having donned his clothes, descended to the chamber which served the Jew as a sitting-room. Miriam had not risen, but he knew her apartment, and as he tapped gently at her door, which was concealed behind the tapestry of the afore-mentioned chamber, he heard her voice within.

"Whither so early, Dickon?" she asked.

"To London bridge, mistress," replied Dick.

"Tarry a moment," said Miriam, "for though I may not go with you to see the ship sail, as my father would not that the house were left empty, I will bid you farewell ere you start."

The light of day was streaming through the sky-light in faint but beautiful rays; the hum of the neighbouring city was just beginning to awake; the carts, wains, and other mercantile carriages were rolling over the road to Aldgate, the fairest portal of great, yet infant London, and all the bustle which altered habits have postponed till later hours, and the song of the merry lark, which is now not heard at all, was already begun. Dick listened, and listened on, but it was for Miriam's light step, which, light as it was, he heard at last.

"Oh, Dick," she cried, as she entered the room, "I have been dreaming of you all night."

"And what did you dream, mistress?" asked Dick.

"I dreamed," replied Miriam, "that you were richly clad, and seated in a high chair, and the people, who were round you in crowds, tossed their bonnets in the air, and called you my lord. I thought I came up to you——"

"And what did I say?" interrupted Dick, whose face was flushed with the animation of sanguine hope.

"You pushed me away," sobbed Miriam.

"And there be truth in dreams," cried Dick, as he took her hand in his own, and clutched it with timid affection, "the world is changed; for I have always heard say that dreams go opposite. So, gentle mistress, you will be richly clad, and seated on high dais, and the people, who will be round you in crowds, will toss their bonnets in the air, and call you dame. Then I will come up to you, a poor beggar, clad in rags; but," he added, as he bent down his head, and looked in her beautiful eyes, "you will *not* push me away, will you?"

"No, never," said Miriam.

"Good betide you!" cried Dick, bounding down the stairs.

"God speed you!" returned Miriam.

She descended the stairs, and followed him down the passage, and when he had emerged from the house she closed the door after him.

CHAPTER XII. THE RAMBLE.

LONDON BRIDGE—THE DEPARTURE OF THE UNICORN—DICK WHITTINGTON GOES ON A RAMBLE, AND IS AS HIGHLY GRATIFIED THEREWITH AS COULD REASONABLY BE EXPECTED.

DICK WHITTINGTON, though he walked along at a moderate pace, soon attained the northern approach of London bridge, which structure, notwithstanding that he had several times been in its immediate vicinity, he had not yet surveyed. There had been a bridge there, as he had learned from Master Simon, as early as the tenth century. It was not, however, a stone erection, but timber only, and was destroyed by fire in the year 1163, when, mainly through the munificence of private individuals, it was rebuilt. But this second bridge, which was also of wood, became so ruinous in a score of years after, that it was at last resolved to build one of stone; and Peter, curate of St Mary Oldchurch, and a celebrated architect at that time, was employed to superintend this undertaking.

The foundation was formed on stout piles, which were driven close together, and surmounted by long planks ten inches thick, and secured to the piles by strong bolts of iron. These planks were coated with pitch, as a kind of preservative from the water, and supported the bases of the piers, which were surrounded by another line of piles, called, by builders, starlings. "These," says Tennant, "contracted the space between the piers so greatly, as to cause, at the retreat of every tide, a fall of five feet, or a number of temporary cataracts, which, since the foundation of the bridge, have occasioned the loss of many thousand lives."

In the centre of the bridge there was a draw-bridge, defended by a strong tower, which had several times preserved London from the spoiler, and which, in times of trouble, was generally garnished with a dozen of human heads. Kentzuer, a German traveller, who visited this country in 1598, records that at one time he counted above thirty heads! A little further on, at either side, were three openings with ballustrades, so that passengers might have a view of the river, which, except in these places, was completely shut out by tottering houses. At the Southwark end, within a stone's throw of the celebrated hostel called the

'Tabard,' rose a dark, arched building, which often echoed with boisterous revelry, and which, if Stow speaks truth, was let out by the city for no very creditable purposes.

Dick walked forward to one of the open spaces in the expectation of seeing the 'Unicorn' under sail; and having discerned it, though not under sail, he ran forwards to the draw-bridge. The waiters, as the men who had the care of this draw-bridge were called, had been at their posts for some time; and on going up to them, he found that Master Simon and the Jew, whom he thought on shipboard, were in their company. Those two worthies received him with their usual cordiality; and as the scene was quite new to him, and would at any time have been interesting, he beheld it with wondering delight.

But what most pleased him, as he gazed on the broad and rapid river, was the advance of the 'Unicorn,' as, with her sails unfurled, but not expanded, ruffling in a fresh breeze, and towed along by four boats, she passed, amid the cheers of the spectators, under the raised draw-bridge. Then spread the free white sails, then rose the red cross of St George in its silver field, then were the towing boats hoisted alongside, then as the shrill whistle, which has from time immemorial been piped by boatswains, sank into a low chirp, rushed forth the cheers which distinguish the English sailor and soldier, and which, on the crimson sea or the gory field, in boarding French frigates or charging French armies, have rung a hundred thousand times the chorus of victory.

Away seudded the gallant bark—now making straight for the four turrets of the White Tower, anon tacking to the opposite bank of Redriff, then dashing through the rippling river towards the Tower again, and straightway, as though she were but trying her strength, making once more for the Surrey side. At last, just before she turned from the sight with the sweep of the river, she displayad a second flag on her mizen, as a farewell, a long farewell, to the three friends who watched her from the bridge. But Dick's eyes still looked for her, and so intently did he gaze after her, that though Master Simon had been talking to him for several minutes, he did not hear a word that was uttered. At length, catching him by the arm, Master Simon gave him a gentle shake, and, aroused from the reflections in which he had been indulging, he turned mournfully away. As he prepared to leave the bridge, which at another time he would have tarried to inspect, Master Simon asked him where he had slept; and Dick replied by relating the events of the night.

"Gramercy, my son!" said the Jew, when Dick had finished his narrative, "I owe you many thanks for your news, and more for your service. I will homewards straight."

"Will you not with us to the cross, then?" asked Master Simon.

"I must first look after my household gods," replied the mediciner. And accordingly, parting from them at the junction of Gracious street with Fish street, he hastened towards Aldgate.

"Step you out, Dickon," said Master Simon, "and we will be in time for matins at Paul's Cross."

Dick obeyed his friend's injunction; but though he said nothing, he could scarcely think that, opposed as he was to the church of Rome, Master Simon was sincere in his purpose of participating in its solemnization of public prayer. There was a kind of smile, too, standing out on Master Simon's jolly face, and savouring more of the proud and exulting sinner than of the demure devotee; but Dick made no remark, and they passed on into Cheapside. This street, which derived its name from chepe (a market), was then the principal street in the city. In the year 1246, when there was scarcely a regular street in London, Cheapside was an open field, called Crown Field, there being at its eastern end an hostelry, which bore the sign of the Crown. About half way down, if tradition may be relied on, stood the Standard, or permanent scaffold, where criminals and many others were executed; and at a little distance therefrom, and nearer to the church of St Paul, was Cheapside Cross. This was built, at the same time with Charing and other crosses, by Edward the Third, in memory of his wife Philippa; and stood beside a conduit of water, erected in 1285 for the supply of chepe.

Each of these structures received a glance from Dick as he passed them, but there was no time for a close inspection, or to ask any questions concerning them of Master Simon, who, as the bells were already tolling for matins, urged him to increase his pace. Proceeding, therefore, at a smart step, they soon reached St Paul's Churchyard, and here, for the first time, Dick beheld the magnificent cathedral. As it may happen, however, that the chronicler may have a future opportunity of describing this edifice, and as the present purpose bears more upon the celebrated cross, the reader must follow Dick to the latter structure.

A pulpit of wood, covered with lead, and mounted on steps of stone, formed the cross. At this place, where, in the forenoon of Sundays, the most celebrated divines expounded the gospel, the court, the mayor and aldermen, and the principal citizens, were wont on those occasions to resort; and here, too, in turbulent times, the most popular orators addressed the citizens. There were covered galleries for the king and his train: and the superior class of citizens, in the opinion of the industrious Tennant, were afforded similar accommodation. On the present occasion, though it was so early in the morning, an immense crowd had congregated in the front of the cross, and as Dick, led forwards by Master Simon, approached that place, a high dignitary of the church, wearing a costly mitre, ascended to the pulpit.

The most profound silence prevailed, and, following the example of every individual present, Dick removed his hood. A short Latin prayer was repeated by the ecclesiastic, who, as Master Simon informed Dick in a whisper, was no other than the Bishop of London, and, so far as the Romish party was concerned, the most popular preacher of the time. The bishop then looked round at the crowd, and having briefly solicited their attention, addressed them thus:—

“Worshipful citizens and my very good children, there has gone a rumour abroad concerning ye, who were wont to pay respect unto authority, denying that you be other than a traitorous set; and there be some, not over scrupulous in their consciences, who accuse ye of many things. And Holy Church will examine, my very worthy and right faithful children, into what these slanderers accuse ye of, which, as they would have us believe, is enmity to the good and mighty prince, our honoured lord of Lancaster. That there be some disloyal knaves among ye I discredit not; but that ye, my children, are ill-affected, I dare not believe. Howbeit, that the mouth of slander may be stopped, and that all men may know the church enjoins loyalty, I have come here this day; and as I stand afore God, as a consecrated minister to man, I do pronounce, in His name, anathema against the disobedient. He and his house, his man-servant and his maid-servant, all who shall lend him charity, or look on him with compassion, are thenceforth shut out from the pale of the church, and, under the ban of the holy vicar, resigned to Satan and his angels.”

The address was short, but it made a visible impression on the auditory, who, on the bishop's descending from the pulpit, collected in groups of five or six, and talked the matter over.

“I suppose, my masters,” said Master Simon, as he joined one of the groups, “the mayor and aldermans will have to discuss on this?”

“Ay,” replied one of the persons whom he had addressed. “There is to be a council holden at Alderman's Bury, and now I think on't, I will hie me there.”

“I'll 'company you,” rejoined Master Simon.

“Prithee no,” said a third person, extending his naked rapier. “I know you for a non-contenter, a swaggerer, a touch of your bully, a fellow who knows your passado and your puneto, and can count on your spells and your strategies. I attach you in the name of the king.”

He seized the collar of Master Simon, who, being so suddenly arrested, was at first incapable of resistance; but recovering his presence of mind, and perceiving that he was detained by one man only, he endeavoured to shake him off.

“Ho!” he cried, “here are your bullymen abroad. Will none of you help an honest fellow at a pinch?”

But there was no response to this appeal to popular passion. The bystanders, apprehensive that Master Simon was one of the delinquents whom the bishop had stigmatized, and fearful of incurring the penalties which had just been denounced against the favourers of such offenders, anxiously avoided him; and two surly partisans, whose slouched hats seemed donned for the purpose of disguise, and who were the only persons who interfered, charged him with endeavouring to create a riot. Dick thought that he recognized the voice of one of these persons, and as he had no desire to be recognized himself, and saw that he could be of no service to his friend, he resolved to retreat. Accordingly, while the two surly partisans assisted the detainer to remove Master Simon, Dick pushed through the crowd to Cheapside, and thence through Cornhill and Leadenhall street to the mediciner's house at Aldgate.

He was much surprised, as he entered the little garden in front of the house, to perceive the Jew's door a-jar; and he was alarmed, on inducting himself into the passage, to hear his friend's voice calling loudly on Miriam. Miriam!—where was she? He sprang up the dark staircase, as a presentiment, for which he could not account, suddenly occurred to him, and rushed into the chamber which served the mediciner as a sitting-room. No one was there, but he heard the Jew's voice in the outer room, which he entered.

"My child! Where is my child?" said the Jew, as he perceived Dick.

"That would I ask, father," replied Dick. "Was she not here when you arrived?"

"No," returned the Jew.

"Then how did you gain entrance?"

The Jew made no reply, but returning to the outer chamber, again invoked his daughter. Dick followed him, and examined the tapestry which hung round the room; and as the Jew, who watched him anxiously, began to give her up for lost, he ascended to the upper rooms, and searched every corner that could afford concealment. But no Miriam appeared, and he returned in despair to the mediciner.

"'Tis no frolic," he said, as the anxious father inquired the result of his search; "she has gone."

Again and again did the mediciner traverse the house, exhorting his daughter to disclose herself, but in vain. At last, overcome with emotion, he sank down on a cushion, and, throwing his arms on the table, buried his face in his hands.

"Mayhap," suggested Dick, "she has only gone forth on some household errand, and will presently return."

"You know her not, my son," replied the mediciner. "No idle business would lead her forth, nor, in my absence, would she admit a stranger."

"They might put some strategy on her, father?"

"They might," rejoined the Jew; "but in the light of day, even if they had seduced her out, they dare not carry her off perforce."

"When I remember her precautions," said Dick, "and her conceits, and her wisdom, I think she must have gone of her own accord."

"I know none," returned the mediciner, "who have influence over her. God of Israel!" he exclaimed, as a thought suddenly struck him, "yes! there is one, and one only, who could lead her forth. She may be safe yet." And he started up, and made towards the door.

Dick followed him, and they descended the stairs, and quitted the house together; but as the Jew walked at a very quick pace, and did not invite him to do the same, Dick thought that he had better part company. When, therefore, they had passed through Aldgate, he lagged behind, and his friend was soon out of sight.

The agitation and complete surprise which the unexpected and mysterious disappearance of Miriam had excited in his mind, and the conjectures as to the reason of it which naturally arose, had entirely obliterated from Dick's memory the arrest of his friend Master Simon, and the suspicions which, as has been before hinted, he entertained of the parties who had attached him. No sooner, however, had the person of the Jew disappeared, and the lodging of Master Simon, which he was then passing, become visible, than the train of his reflections returned to its original channel; and, recollecting the perilous situation of his good-natured friend, he bitterly reproached himself for not imparting it to the mediciner. Would Master Simon, he asked himself, have behaved thus to him; or would he not rather, if unable to deliver him, have chosen to participate his captivity? Such was the opinion which Dick formed of his friend's fidelity; and, even had he been more intimate with the world, it was no discredit to either his heart or his judgment.

But the Jew, the only friend whom he could consult on a business so important as the deliverance of Master Simon, was already out of sight, engaged, too, in a matter which more nearly concerned him, and which, even if he were finally successful, would occupy him for some time. In this dilemma, after a moment's thought, he resolved to communicate with his master; but when, with this intention, he reached Leadenhall street, he reflected how improbable it was that he would gain an audience, and how, moreover, he would have to encounter Dame Williams. Conscious, however, of the integrity of his motives, and sensible of the importance of immediate measures, he would have persisted in his purpose, and sought, through the interest of Mistress Alice, an interview with Master Fitzwarren; but just as he had decided on this course, and made up his tale as he intended to tell it, he

happened to glance at the front of Leaden Hall, and, making an abrupt pause, he resolved on another line of policy.

He ascended the flight of steps that led to the noble vestibule of Leaden Hall, which, years afterwards, he presented as a gift to the admiring city, and in answer to an inquiry from the porter, who had no recollection of his person, replied that he wished to see Master Henry.

"Then you may wish a long time, my young gaffer," returned the corpulent official; "for may the devil accept me—our Lady pardon me for swearing!—if I admit you here."

"You admitted me here last even, your worship," replied Dick, "and no mischief came of it."

"No mischief came of it!" echoed the porter. "No mischief come of it! No mischief, forsooth! Why, here was our young Lady of Hereford, and—who is worse—her saucy minx of a woman, threatening me with everything but instant death therefore. The devil refuse me, but that was mischief enough."

"I have a weighty matter to speak of with Master Henry," said Dick.

The fat porter laughed till Dick began to feel apprehensive for his life. Something seemed to please him amazingly, but being of a comfortable body, and troubled with a most persevering and mirth-hating cough, which invariably attacked him when he relaxed his risible muscles, there was much reason to fear that, before he had his laugh out, he would be choked. At length, however, he came to; and then the merry old fellow condescended to hint at the provocation which he had received.

"A weighty matter, forsooth! ha! ha! ha!—*hough! hough!* God save us, my masters! And what may this matter be?"

"'Tis one, your worship, which I may not speak of."

"A cartel, I promise you," said the porter; "or stay, no *los*, but an affair of love. Ha! ha! a weighty matter to ladies and gallants! Ha!—*hough! hough!*"

"Prithee, sir, admit me."

"I'm not the fellow to spoil a love affair, my young master; but when there be such a matter abroad, and any of our gallants are implicated therein, it makes the ladies at home here so quarrelsome and jealous. Prithee, then, what is your errand?"

"I was told," said Dick, willing that the porter should believe him to be an ambassador of love, and recollecting some words which he had heard Miriam say on the preceding night, and which, he thought, were not a little to the purpose—"I was told nor to speak a word nor to present a token."

"You should have spoken the pass-word before," said the porter, drawing Dick into the hall. "Repair to yonder chamber, and I will have Master Henry advertised of your errand."

Dick, somewhat surprised at the *open-sesame* power of Miriam's words, introduced himself to the specified chamber, where, to his

utter mortification, he found that he had intruded into the presence of a personage whom he had not the slightest inclination to meet.

There are some persons who, though endued with a spirit that would resolutely encounter imminent dangers, are sometimes affected by a sensation, which, notwithstanding that it more generally subdues the hero than the coward, has in it a spice of fear and a large measure of folly. And yet, in some instances, this curious and painful feeling, which is popularly known by the title of bashfulness, may be traced to an innate modesty, that not only excuses, but even sanctifies, its manifestation. What a paradox is its rubicund and singular confusion, glowing on the cheek of a man of heart and sense, when the sufferer, if he reflect a moment, knows that it is caused by the presence of a coxcomb, or the stare of a doll! It was not, indeed, the vicinity of either of these interesting characters, that, on his entrance into the waiting-chamber, provoked the confusion of Dick; but as it was the eye of a lovely lady, by whom he ought to have felt his best energies aroused, his bashfulness was ten degrees more criminal.

The lady, whom he suspected to be the mistress of Master Henry, was attended by a female domestic, who, from the easiness of her manner, appeared to be her confident also. She seemed to be watching some one from the long window, which looked into the garden, and her face was pallid, as though she had been suffering from anxiety. She turned round as he entered the room, and having surveyed him a moment, stepped hastily towards him.

Dick shrank back abashed.

"I cry you mercy, Sir Page," said the young lady, "and cry you mercy again, for venturing me on your path, which, if Damon be false to Sappho, and she send you in quest of the deceiver, ought to be free of all other fair ones."

"Now, in good sooth," cried the other female, who acted in the capacity of attendant to the first speaker, "in good sooth—ha! ha!—is this a page, or a citizen's scrub? Marry, gaffer maudlin, dost forget your manners? Doff your churl's bonnet, an' it please you, maudlin! And how is it with my dame, maudlin?"

"Hold thy peace, Clarissa," said the young lady, gently. "Thy prate will fuddle the boy, indeed."

"Nay, an' if it please you, fair lady," whispered the lady's maid, "I warrant you I'll worm out his errand. Just hold you your peace, sweet lady, and we'll soon hear if it be a love matter."

"Now Mary Magdalen shield my fame," rejoined the young lady. "Dost think I want to hear tales of citizen damsels? Beshrew thee, Clarissa, would'st make thy lady's ear a receptacle for such ill doings? or say, mistress, hast not a little curiosity in the matter thyself?"

Mistress Clarissa was a little pouted by this insinuation. "And suppose, my lady," she said, "I did feel curious, which is not my failing, I trow there's no harm done."

"Not," replied the lady, "if I be elsewhere."

"Then if it please you, fair lady," observed Dick, who had by this time become ashamed of his bashfulness, and who was resolved to make a bold stroke for a character—"I have come to Master Henry on a matter of much moment, concerning no lady, but a stout citizen, who has done him service. If your ladyship would help me to speech with him, and that straight, I warrant he'd be debted to you."

"Gramercy!" replied the lady, "you speak the oily words of a laced doublet, Sir Youth. But what——"

The speaker stopped short, for hearing the latch of the door uplifted, and turning her eyes in that direction, she encountered a glance from Master Henry, the young cavalier, who, without any other premonitory hint, inducted himself into the chamber. He stepped forwards, with somewhat of a military air, to the window where the young lady stood: but apparently determined not to suffer any act of gallantry, and to show him that, whether she had reason or not, she really was jealous, she glided from the room by the opposite door. Master Henry, in spite of the opposition of Mistress Clarissa, who held his hands so firmly that not even a threatened kiss could prevail on her to relinquish her grasp, would certainly have pursued the fair fugitive to the garden, which course, perhaps, would have been perfectly consonant to that person's feelings; but just at the moment that Clarissa's tempting lips seemed resolved to submit to spoliation rather than her mistress should sustain a similar inconvenience, and just at the time that any other young gallant would have been provoked to desperation, Master Henry was pulled back by Dick.

"Marry!" he cried, starting round, "what ill news? I sailed in the bark myself as far as Green Wic, and she sailed thence with a favouring breeze: so, without thou hast the wings of Mercury, thou canst bring no tidings of the mariner."

"I bring tidings of one of his friends, your worship," said Dick.

"Get you gone, saucy Clarissa," cried the cavalier, "and without the guerdon which you sought so eagerly."

"Sought, indeed, Master Henry!" replied the pouting Clarissa. "Just as if I would allow *you* to kiss *me*!"

But thrusting a rose-noble into her hand—a coin which, even if she had had any longing for such an infliction, amply compensated for the threatened kiss—the cavalier pushed Clarissa out of the room, and closing the door, locked and bolted it.

"And, my good boy," said Master Henry, when he had secured the door, "what matter would you speak of?"

"Your worship," replied Dick, "Master Simon Racket, whom

you may know as the friend of the mariner and the Jew mediciner, was this morning attached for treason."

"Treason!" cried the cavalier. "Why, I always heard say, both from his own mouth and the mouths of others, that he was one of the Lancaster faction."

"Howbeit," returned Dick, "he is attached, your worship; and, as I think, by none of the government."

"I take you for a shrewd lad, my youth," observed the cavalier. "Prithee, then, in plain words, make me acquainted with this mystery."

"Sir Cavalier," replied Dick, "you must know, though it ill-beseems me to speak of such an affair to your worship, Master Simon loves a damsel who is in the service of Dame Alice Perrers, and in the same service he has an ill-favoured rival, who is dispenser or steward to the Dame. Now I will take a book oath, if it be needful, this rival was one of the three men who took him off this morning; and the man who first arrested him, though he was well guised, I know for one of Sir Alfred Sinclair's partisans, and belike acting by his orders."

"Like enough," returned Master Henry. "But how would you have me proceed?"

"Is your worship disposed?" enquired Dick.

"Surely," replied Master Henry, "if I knew how."

"Then, to speak sooth, your worship," replied Dick, "I think Dame Alice Perrers knows nothing of it. I am certain, too, they have taken Master Simon to the Tower Real, where, if they can hash up a charge against him, they will have him put in ward."

"My belief," said Master Henry, "is, they think to worm from him the place of the mariner's hiding. Aha! the fowler's net is broken. Well, good youth, I will to the Tower Real straight; and as I may require your testimony, you had better company me. Bide here a moment."

The cavalier quitted the room, and after an absence of a few moments, which Dick passed in brushing himself down with the cuff of his gaberdine, and otherwise renovating the complexion of his worn habiliments, returned, wearing over his left shoulder a short cloak of red velvet, fringed with gold, and having on his head a black bonnet, set with a single feather in a gold cincture. He pulled his girdle, to which a long cut-and-thrust sword was attached, a little tighter than was necessary; but as a fine figure was then, as it may be still, a great advantage to an aspiring gallant, this slight outbreak of vanity does not merit reproof.

CHAPTER XIII. THE PROCLAMATION.

OF THE SEARCH WHICH DICK WHITTINGTON INSTITUTED FOR
MASTER SIMON RACKET AND MIRIAM SALMON, AND OF ITS
RESULT.

WOMAN, in her proper and natural sphere—which is the quiet round of domestic duties—is gentle, tender, attentive, and fond. She is the cynosure of a happy hearth, the cordial balm of an anxious bosom, the ministering angel of a sick pillow, and, under prosperity or calamity, the same constant and devoted being. But if she be once roused—if her quiescent spirit be brought, by sudden agitation, into forced and unnatural action—she is no longer the soft, timid, passive creature that she seemed, but an obstinate, infuriate, and dauntless Amazon. Her frankness revolves into cunning; her tenderness, timidity, and passiveness disappear; and like the worm, when it bursts the living tomb of its dormant state, she assumes a new shape—is obdurate, daring, and active, till, with the moth, she becomes giddy with her own fluttering, and precipitates herself on the very object which is to reduce her to ashes. To a woman, thrown into this morbid condition, and who had been used to gratify, at any hazard, her every desire, the chronicler has now to lead his hero.

Dick Whittington followed Master Henry Sinclair from the chamber of Leaden Hall, and was not sorry, on reaching the street, to see him turn into a side-lane, which led them past the back of Master Fitzwarren's house. Just as they attained the front of the Tower Real, and while Dick was fearing that they would be repulsed by the portgrave, or porter, they observed the Jew mediciner forth issuing thence. His appearance, at this critical moment, reassured Dick, who was beginning to despond; and though the Jew took no other notice of him than to beckon him on, and entered into earnest discourse with Master Henry, whom he led without the slightest opposition into the court of the Tower, Dick thought that his face bespoke a calmness that, had Miriam been still missing, he could not have assumed. His mind was therefore more easy on that subject, and the presence of two such coadjutors as the Jew and Master Henry, and the hope that their

united exertions would effect the liberation of his friend, revived that firmness of purpose which, from the commencement to the close of his eventful career, formed so prominent a feature in his character.

The Jew, who seemed to be well known to all the domestics and garrison, introduced his two companions into the hall of the Tower, and thence, up a capacious stone stair, into an ante-chamber. He then tapped at the door of the adjoining apartment, and a domestic, who answered the summons, invited them to enter.

They now found themselves in the presence of Dame Alice Perrers, who, on their entrance, half rose from the dais on which she had been seated, and commanded the domestics to withdraw. She then glanced more attentively at Master Henry, and, from a smile which stole over her face, appeared to be exceedingly pleased with his exterior.

"You should give me notification, Sir Mediciner," she said, "before you bring courtiers to my poor bower. Though I am waxing old—being now past thirty—I have yet a woman's failing in respect to the captivation of noble hearts."

This confession, though apparently made to the Jew, was really addressed to Master Henry, who, being as fair speaking a gallant as might well be, replied in a suitable manner. But whether, knowing the lady to be at least forty years of age, he was so fascinated by her beauty as to forget that trifling particular, or whether, ignorant of what was familiar to every one else, he really expressed his absolute belief, this much is certain, that with an air in which surprise was blended with admiration, he avowed his thorough and inflexible conviction that the lady had not yet passed the rubicon of twenty-five. Flattery, modest and pure as may be the recipient's heart, is never too gross for a female ear; for though a compliment may elicit no favour, it cannot naturally offend, and consequently, notwithstanding that she must have formed a very moderate opinion of his judgment if she believed him, Dame Alice Perrers instantly resolved to be better acquainted with the flatterer.

"You play the gallant early," she said, with a smile. "But what business, Sir Mediciner, has brought you so soon back again? And now you are here, why do you stand so mute?"

"This cavalier, my lady, can tell you more fully than I," replied the mediciner.

The lady immediately turned to Master Henry, who, after a few prefatory compliments, made her acquainted with the several suspicions which he had derived from Dick Whittington, and which, as coming from himself, he assured her rested on warrantable grounds.

"This is an aggravation of the outrage on your dwelling, Sir Mediciner," said the lady, whose rage had scarcely suffered her to wait the close of the cavalier's communication. "By the living

God!" she added, recovering her breath, which the impatience of her speech had broken, "by the living God, I say, these fellows shall rue their toil! So ho, there!" and she stepped, with a brisk yet stately pace, to the chamber door, which, to the utter terror of Dick, who was standing beside it, and whom she did not seem to notice, she kicked rather than flung open, "Warders, guards, there! Treason!"

The last startling word the lady uttered at the pitch of her voice, and its effect on the domestics and the garrison, who straightway crowded into the adjoining chamber, was wonderful. The lady herself presented such a picture of passion, wrought up to such a fearful intensity, that Master Henry began to feel apprehensive for her health, and, with the view of striving to smooth her temper, pressed forward to speak to her; but the Jew, who had hitherto stood calm and composed, with his brawny arms folded across his breast, as though he were an unconcerned spectator of the scene, drew him back.

"Bring Rudleigh, my dispenser, here," cried the lady; "but let him be ironed well, Sir Warders! Hark you, in your ear, Sir Portgrave,"—and as he drew near she whispered to the person whom she had bidden advance.

When the portgrave, the warders, the guards, and the other functionaries, military and domestic, whom Dame Alice Perrers had so abruptly summoned to her presence, and whom she had with equal abruptness dismissed, had all retired to execute her will, that lovely yet passionate lady, rendered more furious by the consciousness that she was exposing her emotion, paced the room with short and hasty strides, without once raising her eyes from the floor. In a few moments, however, two of the warders returned, dragging in the unfortunate dispenser, and leading forward Master Simon Racket, whom, as it afterwards appeared, they had found immured in one of the Tower dungeons. It was a full minute before the lady, who stood glaring at the fettered steward from his first entrance, could so far repress her passion as to give it expression, and Master Henry and Dick, and perhaps her own domestics, awaited her speech with no small anxiety.

"I charged you, Sir Dispenser," she said at length, "to suffer no harm to come to this worthy mediciner here. If he be a Jew, he hath done good service to our Lord the King, and has the special protection of his Highness. I charged you to be kindly in your dealings with the citizens, as his Grace of Lancaster seeks to appease them. Spite of this," she added, after a considerable pause, during which she seemed to be making a great effort to attain composure, "though I sent you, last night, expressly to shield the Jew, you suffered his house to be hostilely compassed. Now, to crown all, you bring a peaceful citizen here—here, sir,—prison him in my castle—for no other matter than that he crossed thy path."

"Lady!" supplicated the trembling steward.

"Here, sir, here," cried the enraged lady, "to my castle—you bring him to the Tower Real—a peaceful citizen! Sancte George! shall I be bearded in my own palace, by my own dog of a vassal?"

"Lady, hear me a moment——"

"Trembling hound, peace! Be bearded here, eh?—in my own towers? Marry 'tis a quaint conceit enough!"

"But, noble lady," cried the culprit, "I bearded you not—heaven forefend I should."

"Ay, ay," said Dame Alice Perrers, "thou'dst better talk of Heaven. Make thy peace, friend. For pity there, fellows, have you no skulking frere in the Tower Real—no Jesuit to shrive this penitent wretch. Come, I will play confessor——"

"Lady—lady, pray hear——"

"Now by my hope of peace," shouted Dame Alice, stamping on the floor with her left foot, and striking her small white hand on the embrasure of the window till the blood gushed out, "if thou wert ten degrees less vile than thou art, and the king's highness were kneeling there to beg thee grace, I would not swerve a hair. By the hand of royal Edward—whom our Lady shield!—thou shalt pay the forfeit, and pay it to a mite. I have trusted thee, caitiff—thought thee loyal; and thou, poor wretch, hast thought me a mere woman. Count up thy sins, reckon thy misdeeds, wash thy conscience clean with a few salt tears, and prepare for the judgment."

At this moment the portgrave entered.

"Have you raised the gibbet?" demanded the lady.

"Yes, my lady."

"Off with him, then! To the gibbet with him! Zounds! am I to speak twice, knaves? To the gibbet with him!"

"For heaven's sake!" cried Master Henry, "for your own sake, most lovely lady——"

"By God, he shall die!" shouted the lady. "Off, off with him! To the gibbet, I say! to the gib——"

But the paroxysm of passion was now exhausted, and as she stepped forward, with arms outstretched, to enforce the execution of her orders, she fell back into the arms of Master Henry, who, while the Jew directed all the company, save a female domestic, to withdraw, carried her into an alcove at the extremity of the chamber, and extended her on a low couch. Dick Whittington, being one of the company expelled, did not see the issue of the lady's hysterics, nor did he tarry to inquire; but, being now at ease in respect to Master Simon, he determined to push on to Aldgate, and see if he could learn anything of Miriam.

He was not long in traversing the intermediate distance. He kicked against the door, which appeared to be secured in the usual manner, and was hailed by a voice that he recognised at once as Miriam's.

" 'Tis I, Dick Whittington, fair mistress," he said, and the door was straightway opened.

" So, mistress," he continued, as he entered the passage, " you have been playing the truant ? "

Miriam smiled.

" You were not forced or cajoled away, then ? " asked Dick, on reaching the upper chamber.

" Suppose I say no ? "

" Nay, and you say no, I must then think you were not. "

" And suppose," said Miriam, " I say a young page, arrayed in velvet and gold, and bearing in his bonnet a white plume, carried me off,—what would you say then ? "

" 'Twere strange. "

" But *true*," added Miriam. " Dame Alice Perrers, hearing of the attack on our dwelling, sent her page for me this morning; and I was led to her bedside, before she arose, that I might relate the particulars. "

" But might not another have taken you forth as thus ? "

" Trust me, good Dickon, no. The secrets of the great, whatever they be, are not to be divulged; but this much I may tell you, though I would not another, that my father is bounden to Dame Perrers, and she to him, and they have tokens and passwords between them. "

" Enough, mistress," rejoined Dick, " I was careful only for your behoof. "

" Thanks, Dickon," replied the other. " Thou hast a kind heart, being a Christian, to care for one of my faith. "

" Nay, nay," returned Dick, whose cheeks crimsoned as he remembered his original prejudice against the Jew. " If I cared not for those who cared for me, even though they were paynims, I were no Christian. But what says that paper, mistress ? If I be not deceived, seeing you fold it so carefully, it must be of moment. "

" It is a song, Dickon; one which my sire loves well to hear, but which has no charm for Christians. "

" If it would please you, good mistress——"

" Well, well, you shall hear it, then," interrupted Miriam; and taking up a dulcimer which lay on the table, she accompanied its notes with the following song.

Song of Miriam.

Sons of Judæa, who ever of yore,

Were disposed with the free and the bold,

Dead is the spirit that upward did soar

O'er the crest of the tyrants of old !

Ah, your name is ne'er breathed where 'twas sung heretofore,

Where the Jordan sweeps round the tall sycamore,

Where the slaves of the bearded Philistine deplore

The sad story their poets have told !

Green look your valleys, and ripe seems the vine,
But the temple of Solomon's low !
Zion looks fair, as the lorn pilgrim's shrine,
But her helm bears the flag of the foe !
And the olive trees, too, where your maids would recline,
And awaken their voices in chorus divine,
Or to love's softer music a moment incline—
Now the Moslem reposes below !

" 'Tis a doleful lay, mistress," remarked Dick, " but sweetly carolled."

Miriam smiled.

" I fear me," continued Dick, " I shall have to learn the gay science soon ; for I know not how my master will regard this long truancy of mine, and, if he turn me off, I must get bread some way."

Miriam rose and quitted the room, and, before Dick had ceased wondering what had led her forth, returned, bearing a small tray, on which, to his perfect surprise, he immediately descried some inviting eatables.

" Eat," said Miriam.

" I broke not my fast yet," said Dick. He tried to eat, but he could not swallow the food, and he gave up the attempt.

" Fret not," said Miriam. " He cannot turn you off, Dick. My sire and Master Simon will tell him how you have been doing."

" I dare not return till they do so," said Dick.

" Why, surely Mistress Alice will befriend you ?"

" Belike," returned Dick, " but then she may be abroad."

Dick, in fact, was cogitating on the sort of reception which he was likely to meet from Dame Williams, and the prospect was by no means calculated to exhilarate his spirits, which, throughout the three preceding days, had been subjected to unusual excitement. This brown study, however, was interrupted by a knocking at the outer door, and while Miriam descended to answer the summons, he strove to regain his almost-habitual composure. In this he partly succeeded ; and when the mediciner and Master Simon Racket, whom he heard in the passage below, entered the chamber with Miriam, he was prepared to receive them.

" Come along, Dickon," said Master Simon. " I have accounted to Master Fitzwarren for your absence, and he has given orders that none shall question you. I have come to see you home."

Dick instantly rose, and having taken leave of Miriam and her father, and thanked them for the interest which they took in his welfare, quitted the house with Master Simon.

As they passed down Aldgate, which was crowded with wains and pedestrians, their attention was suddenly arrested by the ringing of a bell, which, as Master Simon informed Dick, was the

preliminary to a proclamation by the city crier. That functionary, unfortunately, was rather diminutive in stature, and consequently, was not visible in the crowd which had congregated about him; but by dint of pressing forward whenever an opportunity offered, and then raising himself on tip-toe, Dick had a tolerable view of him. He was dressed in an enormous great coat of scarlet cloth, profusely decorated with black worsted, and apparently, considering its immense capacity, designed for the purpose of engendering suffocation. The perspiration streamed down the poor fellow's face—at least down that portion of his face which an umbrageous cocked hat did not immure; but, notwithstanding all these discouraging circumstances, he appeared to wear a bold and important front. His proclamation, which he delivered in a shrill and dissonant tone of voice, was to the effect, that on the third day thence, the mayor, aldermen, and freemen of the city, in obedience to the commands of the King's highness, would walk in procession to the church of St Paul, and there, at the altar's foot, disclaim all enmity to the Duke of Lancaster. Then, in the abundance of his grace, renewing his confidence in the good faith of his loyal citizens of London, the King would graciously restore their suspended charter; and, as theretofore, the city would be governed by its own mayor. A murmur, expressive of their discontent with the conditions, arose from the crowd, who, however, were dispersing quietly, when a gaily-dressed cavalier, having the appearance of a courtier, asked one of them what he was looking black about.

"Marry, brave sir," replied the frightened citizen, "'tis my accustomed look. Prithee, rebuke me not for my looks."

"Begone, thou churl!" said the courtier, thrusting him back with the point of his sheathed rapier.

The speaker turned round, and thus confronted Master Simon, who, without the slightest intention of giving offence, was indulging in the sober and reasonable gratification of scratching his head.

"Are you scratching your head at me, sir?" demanded the courtier, fiercely.

"If it please your valiancie——"

"Varlet! do you bandy words?" cried the courtier, in a great rage. "Body o' me, sir! do you scratch your head at me, sir?"

"What if I confess?" asked Master Simon.

"Then will I run you through the gizzard," replied the courtier, in a less decisive tone.

"Have at you, then!" said Master Simon. "If it please your knighthood—for I take you for an ale-knight—I am scratching my head at your valourship. Now, sir, remember your allonge. Soh!—" and Master Simon drew.

"Shame! shame!" cried the spectators. "What, ho! a brawl here in open day? Part 'em! part 'em!"

These hints of the possibility of popular interference, which

somewhat discouraged Master Simon, only tended to make the courtier more furious; for though, at the onset, he turned pale, and seemed to shrink from his opponent, he became quite heroic when he was seized by three of the bystanders, who, so determined was he to resent the insult which he had received, could hardly hold him back. Many men, when placed in a similar situation, have recovered the courage which the mere sight of a naked weapon had previously put to flight; and the courtier, by a liberal dispensation of blasphemous oaths, and an increasing struggle for freedom, when, as he well knew, he was beyond the reach of his adversary, impressed many of the bystanders with a high opinion of his spirit and prowess. Master Simon, on the contrary, walked quietly away with Dick, inwardly regretting that his passionate temper had precipitated him into so untoward an adventure.

They soon reached the house of Master Fitzwarren, and Dick, on his entrance into the kitchen, was surprised to find Dame Williams disposed to affability.

CHAPTER XIV. THE PAGEANT.

OF THE ENCOUNTER OF DICK WHITTINGTON WITH A CERTAIN ALE-KNIGHT—OF THE GALLANTRY OF DICK, AND THE MANŒUVRE OF MISTRESS ALICE FITZWARREN—OF THE PAGEANT OF THE CITIZENS—OF THE POLITICAL ENTHUSIASM OF MASTER SIMON RACKETT—OF A MYSTERIOUS AND UNEXPECTED SUMMONS WHICH DICK RECEIVES.

IN vain did Dick Whittington set sundry brick traps, garnished with burnt cheese and other choice delicacies, with a view to the more comfortable accommodation of the numerous visitors to his garret, for notwithstanding that the top brick of the trap rested on a slender stick, which was ingeniously contrived to give way on the first introduction of an inmate, and albeit that a savoury morsel, exposed in the bottom of the trap, embodied an invitation which few rats could resist;—there was, nevertheless, something in the construction of the trap which those shrewd animals regarded with suspicion; and if any one of them, more rash or less timid than others, approached its brink, and regaled his nostrils with the balmy and refreshing fragrance that issued therefrom, there was such a Bastile-like look about the whole affair that the adventurer usually retired.

Two or three old depredators, whose greediness and luxurious habits led them beyond the bounds of prudence, and whose remains were found by Dick at the bottom of the several traps, were exposed as examples to their erring generation; but whether their bodies were removed for the purpose of decent interment, or whether they were devoured in mistake by their afflicted relatives, it is certain that Dick missed them the next morning. This circumstance, which, if the first conjecture be correct, showed the pitch of civilization to which the rat community had arrived, only incited Dick to increased exertions; but as he had now no feline coadjutor, and was therefore obliged to depend exclusively on his own right arm, he was soon convinced that he was unequal to the task. Necessity, however, which is said to be the mother of invention, developed, and then exercised to this end, that power of reflection which he possessed in an eminent degree, and which, though its thousand mouths are always silent to some persons, constitutes the artillery of the human mind.

He had intended, on receiving the gratuity which Master Henry had presented him, to purchase another cat; but when, on searching his pocket, he found that he had lost the coin, he was induced both to relinquish this intention, and to affect that abstract comfort under adverse fate which so well becomes a philosophic frame of mind.

On the second evening from the departure of the 'Unicorn,' at a little after sunset, he was ordered to attend Mistress Alice Fitzwarren, who was about to take an airing on horseback. From his earliest childhood, and particularly during the latter years of his residence at Taunton-Deans, he had been familiar with the routine of the stable; and being of an assiduous and inquiring disposition, and having little else to employ him, had made himself intimate with everything relating to the proper treatment of horses. He was therefore well qualified for the post of groom to his young mistress, and but for his dress, which was rather mean, would have made a respectable equerry. He soon equipped the palfrey, which he furnished with a side-saddle,—an article that had recently been introduced into England, to the great disparagement of the good old custom of ladies riding astride. He then led the palfrey to the front of the house, and awaited the coming of its fair proprietor.

Mistress Alice was soon ready. Dick doffed his hood as he assisted her from the *montoir*, or stepping stone, to the saddle; and—as who would not under similar circumstances?—having his wits about him, thought that it was a marvellous proper foot which he helped to the stirrup. He trotted along by the side of the horse, with a long check-rein in his hand, thinking himself exalted by his office; and certainly, as he passed down Cheapside, he seemed to be envied by no few of the passengers. And then, now and anon, the playful palfrey would attempt a sort of demi-volte, as though he were in good sooth a knightly steed; and then Mistress Alice would look pale, and, after correcting the horse's pace, Dick would reassure her. Then some grave old citizens, as they passed along on the causeway, would shake their heads, because they considered the adoption of the side-saddle an invasion of old-established and venerable institutions; and then some gay cavalier, who jostled the grave old citizen out of his path, would swear by Sancte George that the damsel rode gallantly, and that, if she did not alter strangely, she would one day be worth knowing; and then some gay young sparks would stare, as gay young sparks generally do, and, if they caught the eye of Mistress Alice, doff their bonnets; and then some bold young 'prentice, playing truant, would think, "Marry, but yon youth has fine times of 't;" and then the young ladies who were looking out of the upper casements of the houses, and the old ladies who were gossiping in the street, and all the softer sex who had the least glimpse of the fair equestrian, would say, "in sooth, my

young dame has come out to show herself—pssha! such a baggage;” and then—But Mistress Alice and Dick passed them all.

“And what place is this, fair mistress?” asked Dick, as they reached a lonely wooden bridge that crossed a small river, which, about half a mile lower down, ran into the Thames.

He asked the question, not so much from curiosity as a wish to arrest the progress of his mistress, for he had observed, with some alarm, that they had been dogged a considerable distance by a suspicious-looking man, whose slouched hat and shoulder cloak were arranged with a view to disguise; and he hoped that, if his mistress remained a few moments on the bridge, this person would pass on.

“This is Old Bourne bridge, Dick,” replied Mistress Alice. “That little streamlet there is the Old Bourne of the city; and this river is the Fleet, where the fishers bring their fish. Yonder gate there is Old Bourne bars, where the lazars are. That hill is called Old Bourne hill. At your back is Smooth Field, where the King holds his tourneys, and the citizens their sports. Yon old grey building, down by the Thames, is the monastery of the Black Friars (whom our Lady help!); and this straight road here,”—she pointed up Holborn hill—“leads you to the hospital of Sancte Giles, builded by a good queen of old, whose name I disremember.”

“I thank you kindly, good mistress,” said Dick. “’Tis a pleasant place.”

“Beshrew thy heart, Sir Groom!” cried a voice behind them. “How durst thou prate where thy betters be silent! Ugh! how thou smell’st of the stable!—So ho, fair mistress! can you do us a caracol? Can you play us a demivolt?”

“Thou hadst best hold thy peace, Sir Cavalier,” said Dick, placing himself between his mistress and the intruder. “Thy speech comports not with a gentle bearing, though thy apparel may.”

“Beshrew thee for a foul-mouthed and scurvy young knave!” shouted the stranger. “And thou takest dudgeon at the bravery of my tongue, and darest therefore to give me mouth, I will requite thee with a cudgel. Ho you, fair mistress!” he continued, taking hold of the palfrey’s bridle, “wilt dismount a space?”

“I thank you, gallant sir,” replied Mistress Alice, endeavouring to assume composure, “but I am for home.”

And she gave the rein a sudden jerk, which threw off the loose hold of the stranger, and her steed sprang into the road. Dick, who was as much surprised at this manœuvre as the stranger, made an attempt to follow, but before he could get clear of the bridge, he received a blow which prostrated him. A loud cry from Mistress Alice, who had turned round to see if he followed her, brought out the inmates of a small tenement on the hill;

and the stranger, seeing them run down, thought to make off. Dick, however, caught him by the leg.

"Tarry awhile, Master Rudleigh," he cried. "Tarry awhile, I prithee."

But Master Rudleigh drew up his foot, and then kicked it back against Dick's breast, and having thus enlarged himself, took a hasty leave. Dick instantly sprang to his feet, and notwithstanding that Mistress Alice, who now turned back to the bridge, called to him to retire, took up a large flint stone from the road, and hurled it with mathematical precision at his retreating antagonist. The missile knocked off his hat, but Master Rudleigh caught that piece of personal furniture in his hands, and without once looking back, continued his retreat. He had, indeed, no time to lose, for two stout fishermen, whom Mistress Alice's alarm had brought from the aforementioned cottage, had nearly reached the bridge. As Mistress Alice, however, was some time explaining to the fishermen the nature of the outrage, and as she offered them no guerdon to pursue him, he reached Ludgate hill without interruption, and disappeared. The two fishermen also retired, and Mistress Alice and Dick followed their example.

"Certes, Dick," observed Mistress Alice, "but you have a most courageous spirit. Only that you happed on such a sound beating, and in my service, I could loff to think how you turned round on that ale-knight."

"Ay, my mistress," replied Dick, "'twere a loffing matter."

"You disposed of your munition with a right good aim," laughed Mistress Alice.

"I' faith," replied Dick, "I spoiled the exactness of his bonnet."

"And what am I to give you for a recompense?" asked the young lady.

"If it would pleasure you to give me that rose from your cap," said Dick, "I would be more than recompensed."

"Thou hast asked but a small one," rejoined the young lady, taking the rose from her cap, and presenting it to him.

Dick made a low obeisance as he accepted the flower, which he placed in his bonnet, forgetting at the time that it completely obscured the glory of the Virgin Mary, whose effigy, as has been before noted, was there installed.

They soon reached home, and having assisted Mistress Alice to the *montoir*, and disposed of her palfrey, Dick repaired to the abode of his friend the mediciner.

The next morning, being a general holiday, Dick rose with the first dawn, so that he might be able to fulfil his several duties before the hour of breaking fast; and notwithstanding that he had to encounter considerable opposition from his old friend the cook, who varied the monotony of his labours with sundry cuffs on his ear, he effected this desirable end. He then ascended to his garret,

in order to put himself in proper trim for a walk; and though he had no change of apparel, and the little which he possessed had lost its primitive complexion, there was a neatness about him which, with his fine frank countenance and handsome person, made up for the meanness of his array. There is a dignity which a laced doublet cannot impart—a freedom of limb that is sometimes seen in tattered hose, a boldness of contour, masculine and full, that, at least in a female's eye, is more elegant than a jerkin of velvet, and all these natural attractions—which may be said, in the generality of instances, to mark the peers of nature—were, without his being conscious of it, possessed by Dick Whittington. Strange, that to the rich and powerful, by whom one would suppose them to be inherited from a long line of noble ancestors, nature should often deny these excellencies, and, in the liberality of her fickleness, confer them on the low-born and obscure!

As Dick descended the stairs, on his way to the street, he encountered Mistress Alice.

“Give you good morrow, Dickon,” said the young lady. “Gramercy! is that the rose which I gave you last eve?”

“No other, fair mistress,” replied Dick.

“Why, ’tis as fresh as when ’twas plucked.”

“Nay, nay, mistress,” rejoined Dick. “I kept it in water all night, and watered it fresh this morning, but it has lost its sweet scent.”

“And you are going to sport it in your bonnet to-day?” asked Mistress Alice. “In sooth, Dick, your bravery costs you dear.”

“Only a beating and a loff, mistress. Who would deport him not the same for the same meed?”

“Not many, I ween,” replied the young lady. “But if you be bound for Paul’s church, and wish to have a good view of the pageant, you had best hasten you. Away!” she added, smiling, and Dick accordingly departed.

How the bells were dinging in the weary ear, and how the cits were crowding towards the venerable cathedral of St Paul’s! What gay holiday clothes, what lovely damsels, what staid old citizens, what gay young gallants, what swearing, tearing, overbearing cavaliers did Dick’s eyes contemplate! And then what a cry, what a flourish of trumpets, when the ancient and honourable train-bands, dressed in their gorgeous attire, and mounted on their stately steeds—all sturdy citizens, with plumed caps and moustachios, with bold hearts and a martial bearing—what a cry, what a flourish of trumpets, what a beating of drums when they rode down Cheapside on their way to the cathedral! Such a cheer as was given for the ancient and honourable train-bands, and such a salute as the ancient and honourable train-bands returned, and such a waving of kerchiefs from bright-eyed damsels, and such a “God save you, brave citizens!” from the old women, and such a discussion among the lower orders, as to

whether the citizens ought to submit to the Duke, when they had the ancient and honourable train-bands to fight for them;—such a confusion of voices, sounds, and sentiments, Dick had never before heard.

Just as he turned into St Paul's church yard, where the crowd, if possible, was more dense than in Cheapside, some one behind him pulled the collar of his gaberdine, and, on turning round, he espied Master Simon Racket.

"Catch my frock in your hand, Dick," said Master Simon, who was dressed in his best, and who wore such an enormous red rose in his bonnet, that, even in Dick's eyes, he stood convicted as a bragging Lancastrian. "Push on after me, despite of kicks and cuffs, and you shall have a good view."

And away they pushed, to the no small amusement of Dick, who, being behind, escaped with an occasional poke in the back; while Master Simon, who had to edge his way through the crowd, was presented in his progress with divers tokens of remembrance from those whom he displaced. Some of these persons, indeed, reached their arms over two or three heads, and then struck Master Simon with their bats, having, perhaps, intentions hostile to his red rose; but Dick, by stooping down and fitting his head into the cavity of Master Simon's back, received his share of their thumps on his shoulders. Master Simon's aphorism, which he was constantly infusing into Dick's mind—"perseverance accomplisheth many things"—was never, perhaps, more completely exemplified than on this occasion; for though they had to sustain buffets and kicks innumerable, and in many places to propel themselves against obstinate personal resistance, they persevered till they gained an easy and desirable station by the grand porch of the cathedral. They had still an hour to wait, but the scene was so new to him, and he was so sure of having everything explained by his friend, that Dick's patience stood proof.

The noble cathedral, indeed, well repaid an hour's study. The old edifice, which was roofed with wood, had been destroyed by the great conflagration in the year 1008; and the existing church had been founded by Maurice, Bishop of London, in the reign of William Rufus. This enterprising ecclesiastic, however, laid the foundations only, and these were on a scale so extensive, that though he continued the work for a period of twenty years, at the expiration of which he died, yet, as the ancient historian observes, "*hujus laboriosi operis impensam, transmissit ad posteris*," he left the completion of his laborious work to posterity. The body of the church, the transverse aisles, the choir, and the towering steeple, were, during the reign of Henry the Third, erected through the exertions of Roger Niger, who, in order to awaken the devotion of the people, granted an indulgence for forty days to all those who contributed to the undertaking. But though letters hortatory, inviting the co-operation of the laity, were written by several

consecutive Archbishops of Canterbury, and notwithstanding that Simon, a cardinal of Rome, promised one hundred days' release to all who complied with these letters, it was a long time before the magnificent structure assumed a finished aspect. At length however, it was completed, and then it measured in length six hundred and ninety feet; in breadth, one hundred and thirty feet; the height of the roof one hundred and two feet; the height of the tower steeple two hundred and eighty-six feet; and the ball above the head of the spire, says Sir William Dugdale, "was so large that it would contain within it ten bushels of corn."

After Dick had closely inspected this interesting edifice, which was associated with the earliest epochs in the history of his country, he informed his friend of the assault that on the previous evening he had sustained from Master Rudleigh.

"I' faith," said Master Simon, with a face as red as the rose that marked his faction, "if I fall on him he shall account for it."

"How did he 'scape the gibbet, fair sir?" asked Dick.

"Gramercy!" said Master Simon, "though he deserved no better end, I was much afeard of his being hanged. You must know, Dickon, Dame Perrers in her rage cared not whether she wronged the law of its due or no; but when she came to her reason, after two or three fits of histories—so the mediciner spoke them—she simply ordained Master Rudleigh to be well soused, and then, with two gentle kicks, ejected from the Tower Real."

"He deserved as much," returned Dick. "I wish I were a man, and I would requite him his reckoning with me."

"Now, by my honest word!" asseverated Master Simon, "I like thy mettle, boy. I love thee for 't, Dickon. Thou hast a keen—"

The bells of the several churches, which had been silent during the previous hour, now resumed their din, and a sudden hum, like a distant huzza, announced the coming of the procession. The clamour gradually advanced, rising its tone more and more, till suddenly, as the loud bass bell of St Paul's struck a more solemn note, there rose such a cheer from the assembled multitude, whom a simultaneous movement undulated like the waves of the sea, that Master Simon knew the procession had attained the churchyard.

And first, *cap-a-pie*, came the proud and gallant knight, the Chevalier Robert Fitzrobert Fitzwalter, Signior of Baynard Castle, and Hereditary Standard-bearer and Castilian of the city. He bore the city banner, which, according to Strype, "shall be, gules, the image of St Paul, gold; the face, hands, feet, and sword, silver." Then, walking abreast, came the Sheriffs, Master Nicholas Twyford and Master Andrew Pikeman, citizens and goldsmiths, bearing tapers. They were followed by the worshipful citizen and grocer, Master Adam Staple, Mayor, who carried a tall wax taper, impressed with the arms of the Duke of Lan-

easter, which taper he was commanded to set before the image of our Lady, within the cathedral. Lastly, closing the procession, there came delegates from the thirteen incorporated companies of the city, with their warders, carrying tapers, and their banners hung with black bandrols. They were received at the porch by the Bishops of London and Winchester, in full canonicals, who, after the door of the cathedral was closed, preceded them to our Lady's shrine.

The line, which, till the procession had passed into the cathedral, had been kept clear, was now broken, and Master Simon had therefore no difficulty in leading Dick out of the crowd. They hastened up Cheapside, and thence down Gracious street, to the Tower Real.

The Tower kitchen, into which they immediately introduced themselves, was occupied by several of Master Simon's acquaintance, who, on his entry, met him with a cordial welcome. The procession, of course, formed the topic of conversation, but to fair Mistress Eleanor Price, who was one of the company, this seemed to possess no interest. Dick remarked her abstraction, and as she stood very high in his estimation, and he saw that Master Simon was so much exhilarated by the conversation as to forget other matters, he gently hinted to that person that his mistress was very pale. His insinuation, however, was ill-timed, for Master Simon considered it a crime in any one to look pale on so joyful an occasion as the triumph of Lancaster. At that moment, indeed, he weighed Mistress Eleanor, whom he loved more dearly than his life, as a feather in the balance with his political opinions, and if any one had said that the Duke of Lancaster was not the noblest and handsomest man in the world, or denied, or even doubted, the orthodoxy of John Wickliffe and Bill Smith, it would have been cause of mortal feud with Master Simon. He had, in fact, wrought himself up to such a pitch of excitement, by indulging in a kind of freemasonry with his old adversary the gaunt falconer, that just before Dick whispered him, he had expressed a feeling of disappointment that he could not conveniently be martyred.

"Dickon, I love you well," said Master Simon, "but if you again say I look pale, you will offend me sorely."

"I' faith, fair sir," replied Dick, "you look red enough."

"Who looks pale, then?" asked Master Simon. "Tell me, and I will have feud with him."

"Ah, in sooth, who do look pale?" cried the cook, who was also a profound politician, and a constant patron of Master Simon.

"Marry," said Mistress Eleanor, "gaffer Simon looks very red; but I see none look pale. Thou hast colour to spare, Simon; so prithee, if there be any good-fellow pale, impart it."

Master Simon protested that, as red was the colour of the Lancastrian rose, no loyal person could be too red, and he there-

upon exhibited the marvellous large rose which decorated his bonnet. While the company, who were all of the same faction, highly commended his enthusiasm, his friend Dick Whittington felt some one pulling his hair, and, turning round, beheld a buxom-looking damsel, who whispered him to follow her. Amazed at her request, yet seeing that she was in earnest, he watched his opportunity, and gradually stealing away from the company, he glided from the kitchen into the passage beyond.

CHAPTER XV. THE PIT.

DICK IS INTRODUCED TO A CERTAIN LADY, WHO CONFIDES TO HIM A MISSION OF MUCH CONSEQUENCE; WHICH MISSION, OWING TO THE ARRIVAL OF A THIRD PERSON, IS UNAVOIDABLY POSTPONED.

DAME Alice Perrers, on recovering from the hysterics into which the violence of her passions had precipitated her, found herself stretched on a low couch in the alcove of her sitting chamber. When she opened her eyes and beheld the persons of her female attendant, Master Henry, and the mediciner, she immediately comprehended the nature of her situation, and after a few moments' silence, during which she exchanged a kindly glance with each of her attendants, directed the mediciner, in a whisper which was audible to the other two, to use his own discretion in the punishment of Rudleigh. How the Jew, who instantly retired, ordered Rudleigh to be pumped upon, and how he afterwards ejected him from the Tower Royal, has already been certified by Master Simon Racket; but it remains to be shown, with as much delicacy as truth will allow, how Dame Alice Perrers deported herself to Master Henry.

That gallant cavalier, though as true to his lady-love as might well be wished, could not be expected, when led to the experiment, to resist the bland smiles of a rival beauty. And unquestionably, though she might be in her fortieth year, Dame Alice Perrers was the most beautiful woman of the time. In honour of her loveliness a king had shivered his lance; princes and peers, at the lists of Smooth Field, where Edward the Third had handed her to the Queen of Beauty's throne, had knelt for her smile; and poets and minstrels, who are ever the trumpeters of a bright eye, had carried her fame into foreign lands. No wonder, then, that as she lay in her loose morning-robe on the couch of the alcove, and he stood near the estrade to take leave, Master Henry's eyes evinced a degree of admiration which words could not have expressed; for after the volcano-like eruption of her passions, which had awed as well as surprised him, there was a shadow in her paleness that made her look lovely indeed.

She might be in her fortieth year; but her long brown hair,





2

*When Harry first saw in sight of
Diana's face.*

her fair oval face, her large cerulean eye, her ripe, ruddy lips, her full and elegant person, her small, well-turned foot, which, by accident perhaps, was thrust from beneath her long robe of velvet, would have led you to think that she was about twenty-five; or rather, would have so engrossed your attention, so captivated your judgment, and so entirely monopolised your heart, that you would not have given her age a thought. And Dame Alice Perrers, like the most innocent of her sex, was fully conscious of her charms; but to be assured by his mute admiration that they could have effect on the heart of such a youthful cavalier—to know that that heart must as yet be untainted by corruption, that it was glowing with the noblest feelings of humanity, that it had sustained the glance of many a younger and perhaps brighter eye, and that yet, at a first meeting, she had made it the recipient of tender thoughts;—to be assured of this, and to mark his handsome and manly person, was a triumph which her vanity had not anticipated. Her eye recovered its brilliant flash, and her bosom swelled with pride as she extended her hand to bid him farewell; and when he knelt down at her side, and kissed that matchless hand, Dame Alice Perrers felt that she was a woman.

“You leave us soon, Sir Cavalier,” she said. “My matroncy upon’t, Mary,” she added, turning to her maid, “but the torrent of our rage has washed this fair bark among the rocks. Well, and you must go, brave sir”—and the lady dwelt long on the word must. “Give you good morrow.”

“Good morrow, lovely lady,” stammered the cavalier, and retired.

But no sooner had he quitted the room than the lady started up. Her pale cheeks suddenly became florid, and as she stood, with her long hair waving down her peerless neck, and her eyes fixed, glaring at the door by which he had made his egress, a sigh more profound, and haply more sincere, than any that had ever escaped her, burst from her heaving bosom.

“He asked no leave to come again,” she muttered. “He said not he would come this eve, to-morrow, next day, or the morning after; nor did he beg such licence. Lovely lady! lovely lady! Why any puny mouther could say as much, and no two words so little.”

There was a pause.

“Alice Perrers,” she said at last, “thy sun hath set—thy day is over, Alice Perrers. And he so young and blooming, too!—to—to see him no more! *I will*. He *shall* return. Go call him back, Mary! Away!”

“My lady?”

“Aha! True, girl; it should not be.”

And Dame Alice Perrers sat down on the couch, and, hiding her face in her hands, wept like—a woman.

But all that day, and all the next day, she expected another visit from Master Henry. A third day, and a fourth day passed, and he came not; and having in the interim recollected his silent admiration, and on a review of all the circumstances, concluded that it was diffidence rather than insensibility that kept him away, she determined to send him an invitation. There was, however, one solitary objection to this course, and that was her ignorance of his name and place of abode. She sent for the mediciner, who was deep in all her secrets, and sounded him on this point, but that politic person, for certain reasons which the reader may guess, professed an utter inability to afford her the desired information. Resolved, nevertheless, to prosecute her purpose, the lady now conferred with her maid, and learned that, besides the mediciner, the cavalier had been attended by a youth, who occasionally visited the Tower kitchen. This youth was no other than our hero, and accordingly, on his first visit to the Tower Royal, he was summoned to the presence of its lovely mistress.

Dame Alice Perrers received Dick Whittington with an urbanity and condescension which had won her much popularity, and which, extended to a bashful and diffident boy, served to inspire him with a confidence that was essential to her ends. She easily learned, by insidious questions, the place of Master Henry's residence, but by what designation he was known, beyond that of Master Henry, Dick could not inform her. It occurred to the lady that, from his seeming frank and unsuspecting disposition, Dick would be an appropriate messenger to the young cavalier, and that, therefore, as there would be much danger in sending one of her pages on such an errand, inasmuch as his garb would excite suspicion, it would be advisable to employ him in this capacity. Under this impression, without saying anything which would acquaint him with her motives, she desired him to be the bearer of a ring to Master Henry, and a verbal message, soliciting his attendance. Dick, proud to serve so great a lady, readily undertook the mission, which he had no doubt would be the means of making his fortune; but before the lady could give him final instructions concerning the manner in which he was to acquit himself, a rap at the chamber-door announced a visiter.

Dame Perrers beckoned Dick within the recess that constituted the alcove, and thrust him behind a fall of the drapery, which entirely concealed him from observation. She then ordered her maid to attend the door, and the next moment, to the no small trepidation of Dick, who wished himself safe in his master's kitchen, Sir Alfred Sinclair was ushered into her presence.

The traitorous chevalier advanced with a humility of mien and a paleness of visage that formed a striking contrast to the proud bearing and flushed cheek of Dame Alice Perrers. He seemed, as he made an abrupt pause, to be waiting for the lady to extend

her hand, that he might, in conformity with the prevailing usage, salute it with a kiss; but Dame Alice, instead of attending to this ceremonial, directed him to a chair some distance from her own.

"I thought," said Sir Alfred, somewhat daunted, "to have had the honour to taste the fairest hand in Christendom this noon."

"You have done your devoir so gallantly, my lord baron," replied Dame Alice, "that the honour would be on our side. Howbeit, we seek it not; but, and it like your knighthood, would know wherefore you test our patience further, having, as we have been surely advertised, already disdained our injunctions."

"Dame Alice," rejoined Sir Alfred, after a moment's interval, "I would pray you to show wherein I have transgressed. If I have in aught given matter of offence to you, the fairest of ladies, I would atone for it with my heart's best blood. Beshrew me, fair lady, but thy heart must be hard indeed, thus to persecute a devoted suitor."

"Now, give me an owl to sing," said Dame Alice Perrers, "for his hoarse scream would be more musical than thy homespun compliments. Believe me, my lord baron, thou hast no tongue to please a fair lady. Have not I told thee, a score of times, it is not love for thee, whom I know for a knave, that hath urged me in this matter; but hatred to thy brother, whom thou hast served scurvily enough. Besides, thou hast presumed to infringe my orders; and beshrew my heart if I meddle more in't."

"But I have the King's warrant, fair lady," replied Sir Alfred, "and till it be cancelled I will act thereon."

"Then I cancel it now," returned Dame Perrers. "Ho, without there! But no, I will for the Duke's missive myself; and when I show you his Grace's writing, ordaining your brother shall be left at large, proceed at your peril."

Dame Perrers rose and quitted the room, and Sir Alfred bit his lips to restrain his rage.

Dick had felt very uncomfortable during the preceding dialogue, of which, as he was endued with a commendable degree of curiosity, he had not lost a word, and feeling more at ease when Dame Alice's egression from the room had brought it to a period, he leant back against the wainscot with less caution than became him. He was much alarmed, as well as surprised, when the panel against which he had leant, and which formed an entrance to a secret passage, suddenly gave way, and stretched him head foremost in the narrow passage beyond. Unfortunately, too, the noise had been heard by Sir Alfred Sinclair, who started up straightway, and began to examine the drapery.

Dick was not in the least inclined for a *tête-à-tête* with the ignoble baron, and he therefore rose as quietly as he could, and ran down the passage. The sound of his retreating footsteps directed the baron to the spot, and, having drawn his sword, he darted in.

A short distance brought Dick to a flight of steps, down which, as he was entirely unprepared for such a descent, and the place

was so extremely dark as to be impervious to the sight, he was instantly precipitated. After descending about a dozen steps, however, he made a grasp at the quoin of the inner wall, which, at a sudden wind in the stairs, was sufficiently sharp to afford a hold. Thus, in a miraculous manner, he broke his descent; but his pursuer, though more familiar with secret and subterranean communications, had fallen too, and just as Dick had grasped the quoin of the wall, came rolling down after him. Before Dick could recover his feet, which were uppermost, the baron had struck against them, and, extending his hands, seized the skirt of Dick's gaberdine.

For a moment Dick's presence of mind forsook him. A thought struck him that he might there be murdered, even without being allowed time to make his peace with heaven; and his murderer, by a celerity of movement, might escape scathless. Should he cry out? Should he turn and sue for mercy? He strained every muscle for one last effort, and springing forwards, with the energy of despair, leaped unopposed down several stairs.

Thanking an all-wise Providence that his jacket was rotten, and that the main-body had parted thus easily with the skirt, Dick descended the stairs with a rapidity that, to one less dexterous in preserving his equilibrium, would have been highly dangerous. The darkness was fearful, and the peculiar build of the stairs, which, being on a sharp and continual curve, were almost spiral, made him giddy, but he still pushed on. He had received several bruises from collisions with the wall, and when he fell back into the passage, on the breaking down of the panel, had cut his forehead severely. The blood trickled down his face in large, warm, heavy drops; the perspiration streamed over him like water; his hair almost raised his hood from his head; and to hear him strain on—to hear the beat of his heart in each sententious respiration, were a torture to an infidel. How his poor head ached! how his boy brain whirled! how his flesh quivered on his despair-nerved muscles! and, greatest wonder of all, how he ran on still! Whither he was running he knew not, nor did he think or care, if it saved him from the baron; and bruises, wounds, and alls were nothing in a flight for very life.

At length he reached the bottom of the stairs. His right foot came down with a stamp on the humid stone; and before he advanced another step, his head struck against a dank wall. How cold, though the collision was so violent, did it strike his giddy brain! On, on he rushed. "Stop!" screamed an unearthly voice. But who should stop him? On, on he sped. "Stop!" rang in his ear, even in a more hollow tone than before, but he heeded it not. He attained the brink of a pit, which the darkness entirely obscured, and as he leaped forwards, unconscious of his situation, a hoarse scream rang through the vaults—

"God! he is down!"

CHAPTER XVI. THE RIVALS.

MISTRESS ELEANOR PRICE IS PRESENTED WITH A TOKEN OF AFFECTION, WHICH, WITH ANOTHER MATTER, CREATES A GREAT COMMOTION IN THE TOWER REAL. DICK WHITTINGTON RESUMES HIS PROMINENT STATION IN THIS HISTORY.

SIR Alfred Sinclair, when his fall on the stairs was arrested by the body of Dick Whittington, was much surprised to find, from the smallness of his limbs, that the person whom he had been pursuing was a boy only ; whereas, on his entering the secret passage, he had suspected that Dame Alice had placed some retainers there, with a design which, though he could not divine how, might be directed against himself. Though he was now convinced that such was not the case, and therefore did not pursue Dick any further, he nevertheless relinquished a scheme which he had originally intended to execute, and by which, when Dame Alice Perrers told him its purport, he thought to gain possession of the Duke of Lancaster's letter. He sprang up as Dick sprang down the stairs, and before Dick had reached the vault below, he had returned to the sitting-chamber. Here he re-adjusted his dress, and brushed his hair over his left temple, which had been bruised by his fall, and then, having knocked the dust from his beard and monstachios, awaited the return of Dame Alice.

That lady was not long absent. She was, however, too familiar with the baron's character to trust him with the letter, which, on his confessing his ignorance of reading and writing, she read thus :—

“To the worshipful and honourable lady, Dame Alice Piers, greeting. These are to advise you, worshipful dame, that the King's Highness has well considered the matter you spoke of, concernynge one trayturous vassal, Henry Sinclair by name, and he wills the lands of the said traytour to our good and loyal knight, Sir Alfred Sinclair, brother of the said traytour. The further pleasure of his highness is, by favour of the noble Humphrey Bohun, Earl of Hereford, and the valiant and right trustie Sir Herbert de Pye, Baron of Taunton, that the life of the afore-said traytour, Henry Sinclair by name, shall now be spared.—

From our high and mighty Prince John, Duke of Lancaster, King of Leon, and so forth, writ downe by Walter Fatfellow, unworthy frere of Sancte Augustine."

Sir Alfred Sinclair, perhaps, was no longer desirous, being now vested with his lands and titles, for the decapitation of his unfortunate brother; but, however this might be, he kept his opinion and wishes to himself. He rose abruptly when Dame Alice had finished the reading of the letter, and took his leave, to the no small contentment of the lady, who, naturally enough, began to feel concerned for Dick. Before, however, she could resume her conference with our hero, whom she supposed to be safely ensconced behind the drapery, her waiting-woman announced another visiter, from whom she presented a token-ring.

"Admit him," said Dame Alice; and a middle-aged and rather portly gentleman was instantly introduced.

He was dressed in a suit of black, of an antique and capacious fashion, and wore a dark-coloured hood, fitted close to his head. His face was masculine and frank, and his quick eyes beamed intelligence. His pointed beard, his neatly-trimmed moustachios, his brown hair, combed into a hundred natural curls over his temple, set off a countenance that, even without these advantages, would have spoken the poet and the philosopher. He bent one knee, with a grace that would have become a princely coat, as the lady extended her hand, which he raised to his lips, but Dame Alice insisted on his rising.

"What seeks the witty Geoffrey Chaucer of his poor admirer?" asked Dame Alice.

"Your ladyship makes me proudful," replied the poet, bowing gracefully. "I sought but to present your ladyship with this poor prologue, which haply you have not seen yet."

"Ah me," cried the lady, taking the paper, and glancing over it, "the prologue to the *Wife of Bath*—the merry wench that was buxom to the last. I' faith, Master Chaucer, I owe you many thanks."

"I hasted me, noble lady," said Master Chaucer, "forasmuch as a false knave, who is a pot companion of my servant, stole a copy of the prologue ere it was quite writ off, and then, driving down my thoughts into his own mean words, procured one of his mates, a clerk of *Seven Dials*, to write it off fairly. The vile impostor having writ his own name on these false books, spread them about, luring two or three of the unwary with the title of '*The Life of the Wife of Bath*.'"

"Now, by my matroncy!" cried Dame Alice Perrers, "'tis a stain on mankind, and on woman that gives them birth, that such heartless wretches should wear man's form. Fellows they are, Master Chaucer, who would rob you of the labour of the pillow—devastate the harvest of your midnight toilings. By God, sir, these mean-hearted cowards, who dare not disclose themselves at

the guarded hill, where every new comer must present his passport, will walk you miles on the downs adjacent, and waylay and spoil those who have passports to show. I hate your coward, sir,—your thief, your man of the highway, your cut-and-thrust butcher of a robber; but, by our Lady, those crooked limbs of humanity, those deformed progeny of the stews, sir,—nay, a murtherer, who would run you through the body with an exact punto, cry you aha! and then be hanged for justice sake; all these wretches, I say, are before the misereant whō would break his fast on your brains,—a dog who would swill into his insatiable maw at the expense of another's ingeny."

"I would rather," returned Master Chaucer, "have made him drunken for a week, though it would have liked me better to have battered his bones well, even as he broke the bones of my Wife of Bath. But, to quit this fellow, who would cut your throat for the penny in your pouch, I must bid a good morrow to your ladyship, for I am bound for court."

"Give you good morrow, Sir Poet," smiled Dame Alice; and Master Chaucer stepped towards the door.

"Gramercy, my lady!" he cried, as he opened the door, "is there a mutiny in the Tower Real?"

"By my halidame!" replied Dame Alice, "I think yes. Ho, without there!"

But before the uproar which attracted the attention of Dame Alice Perrers and Master Geoffrey Chaucer, and which was so unusual in that fortress as to excite their curiosity, can be clearly explained to the reader, it is essential that he should return to the Tower kitchen.

The party installed in this apartment had been augmented by the presence of a person whose ingress had been unnoticed by the entire company. The collar of his shoulder-cloak was drawn up, and his bonnet was pulled over his forehead, so that, unless he were inspected narrowly, he could not be recognised. He sat in an obscure corner of the kitchen, on a bench of which he was the sole occupier; and though the passing discourse was of the most interesting character, being, indeed, a disquisition between Master Simon Racket and the cook, it seemed to afford him no entertainment. This circumstance, though he probably thought that it would screen him from observation, drew on him the eyes of the cook, who, as she had completely refuted Master Simon's assertion respecting the colour of the Duke of Lancaster's beard, which he averred to be black, but which, even to the satisfaction of himself, she proved to be brown, naturally looked for applause from all present.

"Holy dame!" she cried, "here have we a mute among us,—a fellow—God save us!—who careth no more about the colour of the Duke's beard than he doth about the colour of a freer's hood."

"Body o' me!" cried the gaunt falconer, "but there be no such fellows alive, gentle cook."

"But I say there be, though, Sir Falconer," replied the cook. "Ho, you Sir Stranger! art a pope's man? a crier-up of freers? Speak!"

"I am for none of your arguings," returned the stranger, in a feigned voice. "I am for speech with a fair damsel here, one Mistress Eleanor Price."

"Say you?" cried Master Simon, starting up. "I' faith," he cried, looking more closely at the stranger, "I should know your stature."

"My name," said the stranger, removing his bonnet, "is Rudleigh."

"Rudleigh!" echoed the amazed company.

"I will words with you, then," cried Master Simon.

But the cook, seizing a spit from the fire-place, rushed between Master Simon and his rival; and with an indelicate exclamation, threatened to expel the latter person from the Tower.

"I have come for speech with Mistress Eleanor," said Rudleigh. "You may all set on me, and it like you, but I will go only perforce."

"I like thy mettle," observed Master Simon, "and wish thy bearing in other matters became it. But we are not for war with a single man, so prithee, Mistress Cook, permit him speech with my fair leman."

"Nay, and it so like you, I be willing," replied the cook.

"But that be not I," said Mistress Eleanor. "I want no words with the knave."

"Thou'lt like it ill hereafter, then," rejoined Master Rudleigh. "Prithee be prevailed on."

"What seek you, then?" asked the damsel, crossing over to him.

"Dost know this scarf?" inquired Rudleigh, in a whisper.

"Ay," replied Mistress Eleanor, turning pale, "'Tis my mother's."

"She sends it," said Master Rudleigh, "as a token of my errand. She advises you that she is in a sore distress, which I, and I only can put aside. She prays you, by this token, and by the love you owe your mother, that you will accept my suit, and then, as I have sworn, I will deliver her straight."

"Sir Rudleigh," replied Mistress Eleanor, "thou art a traitor, and a disloyal knave, and seekest by artifice to entrap my love. Simon Racket," she cried, as she caught Rudleigh's arm with one hand, and beckoned her lover with the other, "here is a fellow has pilfered my mother's scarf, and brought it hither as a token, forsooth. I would——"

"Nay," shouted Master Simon, "stand you back, you—all of you back. I have feud with this rascallion. Dickon," he continued, looking round. "Why, where is the boy?"

"The boy?" inquired a dozen voices.

"Ay, the boy!" thundered Master Simon, drawing his rapier. "This losel hath entrapped him—murdered him, mayhap. A murrain on thee, thou black-hearted traitor! what hast done with him?"

"I saw him not," replied Rudleigh.

"Hold you," cried the cook. "Was he not here but now? Thou hast practised glamour on him—thou hast done art magic to him."

"Have him before our royal lady," shouted the company.

"So be it," cried Master Simon. "I will act his accuser, his informer, his flapper-at-the-elbow fellow."

"I will be his puller-on, his 'torney man, his persecutor, his flea-in-the-ear," cried the falconer, seizing Rudleigh by the collar.

And preceded by Master Simon and the cook, and followed by a crowd of domestics, the captive Rudleigh was dragged up the stairs which led to Dame Alice's apartments.

Just as they reached the ante-chamber, where they were about to delegate one of the party as a herald to their mistress, the door of the principal chamber opened, and Master Chaucer confronted them. He closed the door behind him, and waved them back, and having learned their business, and assured them that he would impart it to Dame Alice, desired them to abide his return. He then entered the inner chamber, where, while the throng without were on their way up the stairs, an incident had happened which restores this history its hero.

It will be recollected, that, during his flight through the subterraneous passage of the Tower Royal, Dick had heard some one calling on him to stop, but as he supposed this command to proceed from Sir Alfred Sinclair, whom he imagined to be close at his heels, it only urged him to expedite his movements. His precipitation, however, had nearly cost him his life. A deep pit, wherein, in remote ages, the bones of those unhappy persons who died in the adjacent dungeons were deposited, lay right in his path, and but for a bar, which was stretched across a few feet below the mouth, and on which he fell, he would have tumbled to the bottom. He clung with the tenacity of despair round this limber bar, which bent beneath his weight. He was not much hurt, but if, as he dreaded, the giddiness from which he was suffering should increase, his fate would be sealed. Indeed, almost as the thought occurred to him, his brain reeled; and though he might be said to be still sensible of his situation, and to be striving his utmost to escape, his hold of the bar relaxed. At this awful moment, when he shut his eyes to exclude the prospect of death—when his knees shook with natural apprehension, and his remaining spark of consciousness was spent in an appeal to Heaven, a bony hand grasped his jerkin.

Dick felt that he was being pulled up, and expected that, on

reaching the top, he would be again hurled down. He experienced that choking sensation—that thrilling effect of a sudden shock, which, perhaps, is best described when, in ordinary idiom, the heart is said to be in the mouth. He repressed his breath—

“’Tis a boy,” muttered a voice, which though it sounded hoarse was far from unpleasing.

Dick threw himself round the speaker’s body. In a few minutes, having recovered his firmness, he opened his eyes.

“Who be you?” he asked.

“Like you, hapless child,” said his deliverer, “I am prisoned here. I saw your mad attempt at escape. Alas! where would you find an outlet? Or say, unfortunate,” and she drew back, “were you bent on self-murder.”

“Our lady forefend, good mother!” replied Dick. “I saw not the pit, and marvel, seeing how dark it is, how ’tis seen by you.”

“Alas!” returned the other, “though I have been here but a week, my eyes are so used to darkness, that methinks I could see not in light. How, and thou so young, is’t not so with thee?”

“I am prisoned not, mother. I was chased hither. Didst see none follow me?”

“None, my son,” replied the woman.

“Then will I return straight.”

“Return?” eagerly cried the other. “Return! said’st thou? Dost know an outlet?”

“Ay, mother. But I fear ’twill not serve thee.”

“Wherefore?”

“Forasmuch as it leads to Dame Alice’s chamber,” cried Dick.

“Then will I with thee, boy,” replied the woman. “I was brought hither for no crime—prisoned here, boy, without the dame’s advice. Oh, God! and you will guide me to Dame Alice?”

“That will I,” rejoined Dick, “if we can grabble our way to the stairs.”

Dick’s companion, as she had herself said, seemed to see as well in the dark as he could have done in the light. They were, nevertheless, some time before they made out the stair, which, as it opened into the wall of the vault, and had but a narrow entrance, could only be detected by careful groping. They then ascended to the upper passage, where, in a few moments, they gained the secret panel. Determined to confront Sir Alfred, and accuse him before he left the presence of Dame Alice, Dick darted through, and was followed by the woman. Master Chaucer had just opened the chamber-door, and he and Dame Alice were wondering at the uproar without, when they were surprised by the entrance of Dick and his companion.



*Dick Whittington's horrible adventure in the
Bead-hole of the Tower-Beal.*

"What means this, boy?" asked Dame Alice.

While Master Chaucer closed the chamber-door Dick explained.

"And you, good woman?" said Dame Alice, trembling with passion.

Instead, however, of following the mysterious woman through her narrative, and recording the several interpolations of Dame Alice Perrers, Master Chaucer, and Dick Whittington, the chronicler will give her story in his own words.

The Story of Dame Price.

Once upon a time, ere good King Edward and his heroic son had completed the conquest of France, there dwelt at a small village in Wiltshire, situate about thirty miles from the sea, a person whose course of life appeared to run out of the ordinary channel. He was a stranger in those parts, and his name, which was Price, was borne by no other individual in the county. He had come there with his wife and daughter, then a little prattling child; and much to the surprise of the suspicious denizens, whose families had been located thereabouts for ages anterior, settled on a farm on the estate of Dame Alice Perrers. A quiet man he was, and a civil; but whether it was owing to his idle habits, which might be inferred from the forlorn condition of his farm, or to his easy circumstances, which his indolence did not seem to impair, his new neighbours bore him no good will. He did not, indeed, go out of his way to conciliate them, nor did he appear to long for their better acquaintance, but, as the season suited, he gave them good morrow or good even with as much affability as ever. Now this urbanity only tended to make him more unpopular, for if, recollecting the truism that a worm will turn, one treats a person with incivility, it is naturally expected that he will reciprocate our rudeness; and if, on the contrary, he chooses to be odd, we cordially detest him for his politeness.

But Master Price had one patron in Rudleigh, the franklin, or steward of the lady of the manor. People might talk of the neglected state of his farm, or of his occasional disappearance for weeks together, or of the comfort which, notwithstanding all these unfavourable circumstances, he contrived to maintain at home; but the franklin said never a word. Once, indeed, when Master Price had been absent for nearly six months, and the neighbours began to denounce him as the pursuer of wild courses, Rudleigh had said that he would soon be among them again; and on the night of that day, when most of the denizens had retired to rest, a horse galloped through the village towards Price's habitation.

It was a dark night, though the season was summer, and the wind howled like a hoarse demon, that boded calamity. The

horseman, however, kept good his way; and despite the darkness, which was so dense as to obscure the houses on either side, seemed to be too familiar with the road to render an abatement of his pace necessary. He drew up before the house of Master Price, and having dismounted, and secured his horse to a pallsade, lifted up the latch of the door, and introduced himself to the interior.

A woman, apparently about thirty years of age, who was seated by the side of a blazing fire, started as the horseman entered, and a slight shudder which pervaded her frame, and which she strove to repress, showed that she did not regard him as a welcome visitor.

"Methought, Master Rudleigh, he was to be here to-night?" she said, after a moment's silence.

"I may be a day out in my reckoning," replied Rudleigh, for he it was. "Such things will hap, my pretty dame."

"Then wherefore come you here?"

"I come to press my suit; surely, now that opportunity is so friendly, you will be wilful no more."

And Master Rudleigh, as he spoke, divested himself of his cloak, as though he were fully resolved to make himself at home.

"I am a lone woman, Master Rudleigh," said the dame, "and a hapless, but pr'ythee beware. Be sure 'twere better for you to put your right arm in a lion's mouth, and easier to take it thence unhurt, than to provoke the hate of my William and escape scathless."

"A fico for his hate!" replied Master Rudleigh, snapping his fingers. "I could raise him to the gallows-head to-morrow."

"And would," said a third person, who at this moment threw open the door, "only that I could send thee to the devil a day before me."

The last speaker threw off his long, dark cloak, and tossed his peaked hat on the floor. He was a brawny man of middle stature, and of a surly aspect, which last was not rendered a whit more agreeable by a minatory scowl, that darkened his brow.

"'Twould be bad policy to quarrel," remarked Master Rudleigh, with an air of indifference.

"'Twould so," said Master Price, saluting his wife. "There," he continued, turning again to Rudleigh, and taking a bag from his belt, "there is gold for thee." And he tossed the bag on the floor.

"Is there half here?" inquired Rudleigh.

"All—all," returned Price. "I sell my country for revenge, not for gold."

Master Rudleigh laughed.

"Dost think I done it for gold, then?" demanded Price.

"Pshaw, neighbour!" replied Master Rudleigh. "You should have hid the other bag, which I see dangling from your belt, before you attempted to carry off this deceit."

Master Price bit his lips, and tried to smile, but he could not conceal his vexation.

"Ha! ha! ha!" he laughed. "Twas a quaint conceit. But they will be here anon, gaffer; and thou hast a good half. Hist! they are on us now. There is the drum."—He stepped towards the door, which he threw open, and beckoned Rudleigh to follow.

"The wind is northerly," whispered Rudleigh, as they stood listening at the door, "and the music should come from the south. How is this, gossip?"

"The fools!" muttered Price. "They are tarrying on the coast, spoiling fishers' huts, when they might ravage the inland. I would lay my life, if I had a lease on't, this music attends the old abbot of Wilton, who is alarming the country."

The music became every moment more distinct, and it was clear, as the two listeners returned into the cottage, that it heralded the approach of some armament on the Wilton or Salisbury road. Rudleigh and Price, on re-entering the cottage, seemed to be undecided how to act, and Dame Price, who sat trembling by the fire, was too much frightened to interfere. Suddenly, amidst the tramp of horses and rolling of drums, there rose such loud cries of "Route! route! For Sancte George and the King!" that there could no longer be any doubt, in the minds of any one within hearing, but that the old abbot of Wilton was one and the principal of the array which was alarming the village.

"I must to horse," muttered Price.

"Take mine," said Rudleigh, stepping after him to the door.

Dame Price still sat by the fire. She was pale, and she trembled; but she shed not a tear, nor heaved a sigh, nor spoke a word. Price, as he stood on the threshold, gave her one fierce look, and, seizing the reins and springing to the saddle, dashed the rowels into the flanks of his steed, and disappeared.

He pushed forwards, notwithstanding the darkness and the state of the roads, at the pace with which he had set out. He knew, from long experience when on former expeditions, that he was near a sharp angle in the road, and he was therefore compelled, after traversing about a mile, to stop short, and endeavour to search out the turning. A rude white cross, which stood in the middle of the road, peered through the opacity, and he walked his horse slowly up to it, in order that he might ascertain beyond doubt the verity of his vision. Before he gained it, however, he was stunned by a blow from an invisible assailant; and as his feet sprang uppermost, and his head fell ground-wards, a long knife was thrust into his heart. The assassin, who held the horse's rein with his left hand, had scarcely time to cut the bag of gold from Price's girdle, when a loud beating of drums, announcing

the resumption of the abbot's march, startled both him and the horse; and the latter, breaking his rein, bounded forwards at his full speed, dragging the body of the unhappy Price along with him.

"Murder will out," say some people, and so sometimes it will; but the next morning, when the body of Price was found at some distance up the road, no trace of the murderer could be discovered. There were footmarks, indeed, across a field which came out at the back of Price's house, but these terminated at the wooden cross, and in the opinion of some of the villagers, who examined them carefully, they were the footmarks of Price himself. The neighbourhood, however, had been thrown into such a state of excitement, in consequence of a party of Frenchmen having landed on the coast of Hampshire, in which county they were met and defeated by the Abbot of Wilton, that the inquiry was not pursued with that strictness which, had the public mind been in a more healthy condition, would probably have been adopted; and after the matter had constituted what is called a "nine days' wonder," and all the people thereabout had been to visit the spot where the deceased was found, it was suffered to drop.

The body of the murdered man was duly entombed, and his widow, who did not take his death so much to heart as had been expected, caused a respectable amount of masses to be performed for the peace of his soul. Dame Price then removed to an adjacent cottage, granted to her by the favour of Rudleigh, where, though enjoying the most perfect ill-will of her neighbours, she contrived to earn a tolerable livelihood by the craft of spinning.

Time crept on apace; and though in the outset Dame Price regarded Master Rudleigh with distrust and suspicion, she could not be insensible, when she saw herself surrounded by persons who held her in detestation, of the value and apparent singleness of his friendship and countenance. No wonder, then, that as their intercourse continued, he insinuated himself into her good graces, and as she knew that she was completely in his power, and saw that instead of persecuting he protected her, she reposed in him the confidence which the villain so earnestly desired. In the meantime, as years elapsed, her daughter, Eleanor, shot up into womanhood, and by the permission of Dame Price, and through the interest of Rudleigh, was received into the service of Dame Alice Perrers.

It was now that the hypocrite divested his intentions of their mask, and revealed them in their native deformity. He had for several years, while she was yet a child, resolved on making Eleanor his wife; and the removal of Dame Alice Perrers and her household to London, where Eleanor would be beyond the protection of her mother, seemed to favour the design. But here, where he least expected rivalry, he found himself opposed in the lists by a friend of Dame Alice's cook, which friend was no other than Master Simon Racket.

Master Simon soon found, by means of that dumb correspondence which lovers carry on with their eyes, that gentle Mistress Eleanor Price was not insensible to his personal merits; and though he perceived that there were many difficulties to encounter, and that Rudleigh, ill-looking as he was, was not a rival to be contemned, he was fully aware, as he remarked to himself, that perseverance accomplisheth many things, and he therefore determined to persevere. He was rewarded, in due time, with the heart of his mistress, and, what he cared less about, the mortal enmity of his rival. But the latter person, though perfectly conscious that he could never gain her love, was not the less disposed to win the hand of Mistress Eleanor; and having tried to intimidate her into compliance, not only by threats directed at herself, but by hints of serious charges against her mother, and finding that her firmness remained unshaken, he resolved to adopt the most stringent measures.

Thus it fell, that exactly one week antecedent to the date of the preceding chapter of this history, Master Rudleigh repaired to the stairs nearest the Savoy, situate on or about the site of the existing Waterloo bridge. The river was at high-water, and he rowed his boat close in shore, and waited the coming of a person whom he had summoned to attend him. A solitary waterman, who was lucubrating thereabouts, officiously tendered his assistance to moor the boat; but as Master Rudleigh was about to avail himself of this kind offer, a female, wrapped in a hooded cloak, descended the stairs. Master Rudleigh handed her into the boat, and having helped her to a seat in the stern, and unshipped his oars, pulled from the shore. He made for the centre of the river, without exchanging a word with his companion, and then, as he broke silence, pulled for London bridge.

"Have you thought over my offer, Dame Price?" he asked of his companion.

"Ay," replied the dame, "and marvel you should make it, sir. You say Eleanor accepts it?"

"No," said Rudleigh. "But she will accept it, dame, if you enjoin her."

"That will I never do."

"Never?" echoed Rudleigh, suddenly ceasing to pull.

"Never," repeated the dame.

"But suppose I took her a token, dame," resumed Rudleigh,—"a scarf, or some such thing, as coming from you, and bade her, as she prized its owner, to cry me ay—would there be harm done?"

"I will give no token."

"Well, dame," said Rudleigh, "but 'twere easy to take it from your neck. See here now—at the water here, how calm it is! 'Twere a fairy grave that, dame—a mirror, like, above you, and a bed of mud, soft as down, beneath you, with the fish for

bedfellows. See, 'tis clear, deep, quiet."—And he pushed her head over the bows of the boat, and held it down till it touched the water.

That looked a still grave, indeed—that deep river, with the moon shining on it so sweetly, and the stars, that illuminated the cupola of the world, bathing their shadows in the dark water. No wonder that woe, and poverty, and remorse, and infidelity, and cowardice, when they have lost the last spark of manhood, go and watch it in the moonlight, and mark its depth, its tranquillity, its clearness, its beauty—no marvel that they consider the load which presses on their hearts, or the gnawing of hunger that they cannot appease, or the pricks of conscience that they cannot blunt, or the absurdity, as they believe, of the fable about God and Heaven, and the oblivion, ineffable and endless, which one determined leap will secure to them—no wonder that they plunge, with the scoff and sneer of fiendish scorn, into the inviting flood, and rush, headlong, to the Judgment.

And little recked Dame Price, as her wrinkled lips touched the rippling water, of that reflection which the poet has called "the rub." She had not, indeed, any desire for death, but she was certainly indifferent about it; and if, as she expected, Rudleigh had attempted to throw her overboard, she would have offered no resistance. But this was no part of the miscreant's plan. He soon dropped his hold of her waist, and having replaced her in her former seat, and again betaken himself to the oar, pulled direct for the Tower Royal.

"You see, dame," he said, as he began to pull, "I am no trifler. Marked you well the water, how calm it was? Look you, now, I carry poniards which would make your heart as calm and still as the river."

"I will give no token," said the dame.

"Of that anon," returned Rudleigh. "I have bent you to my wishes thus far; and look you, dame, I will bend your hussy of a daughter, too."

"Thou'rt a bad man," said Dame Price. "I'll no more with you."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Rudleigh. "But I will more with you, not-the-less. Thou hast quandaries of my reputation, then, after all my love and my——"

"Villain!" exclaimed Dame Price, "thou hast triumphed, and——God help me! God help me!"

There was something so sad and touching in the tone in which the dame's supplication to Heaven was pronounced, and its succession to the break in her speech, by the figure which orators call aposiopesis, was so rapid and affecting, that, black-hearted and unfeeling as he was, Master Rudleigh was silenced. Dame Price, exhausted by the agitation which she had sustained, sank back in the stern of the boat; and in less than half-an-hour after-



*The Chance — Midnight —
 Some Time in the power of Rudolphe the Russian.*

wards, when Rudleigh stopped at the secret entrance of the Tower Royal, she was fast asleep.

Rudleigh unlocked the door of the Tower vaults, which were so dark that he himself, used as he was to treading their humid limits, could not have found his way well without a light, and then returned to the boat and raised the sleeping dame in his arms. He bore her up a flight of steps, which led to an upper passage, where, having first laid her down on the damp stone floor, he stripped her of her scarf and neckerchief. He then returned to the boat, which he rowed to a terrace that ran along the river-side, and there moored.

He did not seek any repose that night. Two hours after his landing, having furnished himself with a lantern, together with two loaves of bread and some water, he descended, through a trap-door within the Tower, to the spot where he had left Dame Price. He did not deem it necessary, though it was in his power, to secure her in any of the dungeons, in which resolution he was probably influenced by the circumstance of there being no other prisoner, and by his possessing the exclusive power and privilege of visiting those regions. The sudden glare of light issuing from his lantern awakened the dame, who had slept soundly till that moment; and glancing round as far as her eyes could penetrate, and then looking in the ferocious countenance of her gaoler, she at once comprehended the complete misery of her situation.

"A fine lodging this, gammer," said Master Rudleigh.

"I will give no token," said the dame.

"Ay, but I have helped myself to your scarf, my leman," replied Rudleigh. "And see you here, though your scarf will do my turn as well as your word, you leave not this place till you give consent. I will give your scarf to Eleanor, without fail; and till I can come and tell you how dutiful she is, and what a good wife she makes, here is bread for you. Good den, sweetheart."

"A malison on you!" cried the dame, grasping at his mantle.

Rudleigh struck her with his clenched fist on her breast; and, uttering a faint cry, she fell backwards on the floor. Rudleigh wended on his way; he did not even turn to curse her, but ascended to the terrestrial apartments of the Tower Royal, and thence retired to his chamber.

How Master Rudleigh was prevented by sundry circumstances from carrying out his plan, how he did present the stolen scarf to Eleanor as coming from her mother, and how he was thereupon carried a prisoner to the threshold of Dame Alice's chamber, the reader already knows. He knows, also, how Dame Price encountered Dick Whittington; and what further happened, on the emergence of those two persons from the Tower Royal, these chronicles will in due time make manifest.

CHAPTER XVII. THE FUGITIVE.

A MARRIAGE BETWEEN TWO CHARACTERS OF THIS HISTORY APPEARS PROBABLE. A CERTAIN CAVALIER, BY THE ADVICE OF THE JEW MEDICINER, FLIES THE PRESENCE OF LOVE.

DAME ALICE PERRERS, on being informed of the circumstances detailed in the preceding chapter, expressed an anxious wish to see her discarded steward elevated to the gallows tree; but Master Chaucer, who had been taking notes of the deposition of Dame Price, suggested that it would be more prudent to submit the case to a more legitimate tribunal. As Master Chaucer was one of the law, or, as it would now be spoken, a member of the honourable society of the Inner Temple; and as he argued the case, notwithstanding the warmth of her language and temper, with the coolness and ability of a thorough lawyer, Dame Alice at last gave way, and, having summoned her chief warder into the chamber, ordered Rudleigh to be placed in safe custody.

But if Dame Alice was passionate, and, when moved by passion, unjust—if she was, as some historians have represented, licentious, and haughty, and imperious—if she was all this, and more, as some papistical writers would have us believe (though their broad assertions, if this history were a proper vehicle for disquisition, might be easily refuted)—she was, nevertheless, liberal to the needy, kind to the unfortunate, and, where she conceived a liking, a steady friend. She had often heard of, though she had seldom seen, Master Simon Racket, whom she designated by the name of the rattling mercer; and being well aware of his attachment to Mistress Eleanor, and moved to pity by the sufferings which the lovers had endured, she determined to lend her aid to expedite their happiness.

Accordingly, having concealed Dame Price behind the tapestry of the recess, she summoned the lovers to her presence; and, bidding them wait her pleasure, conferred apart with Master Chaucer.

Master Simon Racket had never felt so uncomfortable as he did at that moment, for though he had a very felicitous idea of the power of his personal charms, and, under the impression that a great deal is involved in attitude, disposed himself in a most fascinating posture—having his left hand with his bonnet over his

heart, his right leg advanced as a kind of prop to his body, his head erect, his shoulders thrown back, and as he had no immediate employment for his right arm, and felt it hanging like a dead weight at his side, wishing it was cut off—notwithstanding this disposition, than which scarce anything could be more irresistible, the reflection that he was in the presence of Dame Alice Perrers depressed him. At last he descried Dick, and though startled at his young friend's apparition, telegraphed him to approach.

"Speak not, Dickon," he whispered, without looking at his friend, for he was afraid that the slightest movement would spoil his attitude, and he had therefore screwed up every muscle to its firmest rigidity—"Speak not, Dickon, for I'm a 'wildered man—a fellow of dreams, a fashioner of drolleries, and I no more credit my senses, or believe what is going on, than I do that you are now alive. Look you, Dick, you may tell me the greatest lies you can think of, and I swear you I'll believe them."

"I' faith," whispered Dick, "you've been talking so much about Lancaster it has made you maudlin."

"Dickon," replied Master Simon, in the same low tone, "you are 'wildered, and so I excuse you; besides, these visions are insubstantial."

"And is that not Mistress Eleanor there?" asked Dick.

"You have the drollest conceits," replied Master Simon, "of any dead fellow I ever met. Only it would spoil my attitude, which makes the man, I could laugh. Look you now, is there a gentle sitting there with my dame Alice?"

"Ay," answered Dick, "a lord or a bishop, I suppose, or a judge at the least."

"And will you avouch," said Master Simon, "that Rudleigh killed you not, and that these things are real?"

"Certes, I will avouch this."

"Then speak no more, Dickon, for you shake my attitude. I must change legs as it is." And Master Simon, having dexterously slipped his bonnet from his left to his right hand, and raised the latter over his hip, drew back his right leg, and planted his left leg forwards.

Scarcely had Master Simon effected this arrangement, and thrown into his broad features an expression of perfect serenity, when Dame Alice suddenly looked up, and beckoned him and Mistress Eleanor to advance. Now no command that Dame Alice might have expressed could have been more inopportune. Had Master Simon been suffered to remain in the position which he had taken up, and which, in his opinion, was so well calculated to fascinate, he would have gone through the scene with tolerable composure; but his advance, which entirely destroyed the beauties of attitude, caused him to be conscious of his awkwardness.

"Your name is Racket?" said Dame Alice.

"Ay, gracious lady, at your ladyship's behest."

"Well," smiled Dame Alice, "and you love this damsel?"

Master Simon felt that, before company, this was a delicate question to answer, and though urged on by Dick, who gave his frock several gentle tugs, by way of intimating the necessity of an immediate reply, he seemed to be considering how to avoid committing himself.

"Silence, I believe, means ay, Master Chaucer?" cried Dame Alice Perrers.

"With lovers, noble lady," replied the poet.

"And will you wed him, fair Eleanor?" continued the dame.

Mistress Eleanor blushed and held down her head, and notwithstanding several "Oh fyes" from her mistress, and divers "a-hems" from Master Simon, replied that she must consult her mother.

"You will not wed, then, without your mother's sanction?"

"'Twere undutiful, my lady."

"Well, then," cried Dame Alice, "your mother shall give her sanction. Come forth, Dame Price, and make your child happy."

Eleanor screamed, as, drawing aside the tapestry of the recess, her mother presented herself. The next moment she was in her mother's arms.

"Be it your province, Eleanor," said Dame Alice, "to see your mother fittingly refreshed. You, Sir Mercer, can attend your leman."

Master Simon, after executing a low bow, and saying "God bless you, lady," made a hasty retreat from the room, in order that a cold, which he had caught a few moments previous, might not effuse itself from his eyes; and Mistress Eleanor followed, supporting her mother. Master Chaucer, also, rose to depart, and on taking his leave, assured Dame Alice that he would communicate to the Duke of Lancaster the offences which Rudleigh had perpetrated.

Left alone with Dick, whom she beckoned to approach, Dame Alice reverted to the subject which had introduced our hero to her notice.

"I am right sorry, my young page," she said, "for the mishaps which have chanced you. But take them not to heart, boy. Fulfil only the mission I will intrust to you, and you shall soon change your garments and your condition."

"'Twere meed enough for me, fair lady, to be thy errand-bearer."

"A pretty speech, boy," smiled Dame Alice, striking Dick playfully with her glove, "but thou shalt have meed sterling. I want you, now, to repair to Leaden Hall—not presently, but say to-morrow, and tell Master Henry, the young cavalier, to come hither forthwith. I have business of moment with him."

Dame Alice blushed as she spoke. She thought that Dick,

young and innocent as he was, could penetrate the thin veil which she had thrown over her purpose, and she felt ashamed, as she cloaked it with a falsehood, of her woman weakness. To one who laughs at romance, even when it stands out in bold relief in the world which we occupy, her conduct may appear unnatural; for love at first sight is accounted a joke too silly to be thought of. Yet love—genuine and sterling love, is usually contracted at first sight. It is at first sight that the heart receives the impression which, after one night's consultation with the pillow, ripens into love—which creeps, as the vine creeps round its stay, over the entire surface of the heart, and clings to the mind, and twines with the thoughts, and blossoms with dreams, and bears with memory, till, imperceptibly but surely, its wild luxuriance stifles every other feeling, every other passion, all hope, all peace, all happiness, except that which is comprised in and constitutes fruition of the one object. No wonder, then, that Dame Alice Perrers, who had been wont to gratify her every whim, however fantastic, and whose peculiarity of temperament rendered her more liable to abrupt impressions, should so suddenly contract a tender passion, and, having contracted it, give it head-way. Yet she was not without delicacy, nor was she destitute of feminine feeling, as the blush on her cheek fully testified.

“You may depart now, boy,” she said, after a pause; “and when you have done your errand, visit me again.”

Dick made his bow, and emerged from the room. He descended to the kitchen, where he found Master Simon and his party, with whom he made himself merry till the evening. He then returned home, and having paid his respects to Mistress Alice, whom he encountered in the passage, retired to his garret.

The next morning, having risen with the dawn, he set about his work, and despite sundry cuffs and considerable abuse, which he sustained at the hands of Dame Williams, he dragged through the day. It was past sunset when, slipping out of the house, he sallied into the street, and proceeded to Leaden Hall.

Being provided with the pass-word, which had so instantaneously cleared his way on a former occasion, Dick approached the hall door with less hesitation than he usually displayed, and inquired of the porter for Master Henry.

“The young cavalier,” replied the porter, “has been missing these two past days. We have made search for him everywhere, but neither he nor Hubert Cromwell, whom we suppose to be in his company, can be found.”

Dick turned away from the door with a feeling of disappointment, and, after a moment's consideration, determined to visit the Jew mediciner, and ask his advice. While he is repairing thither, to acquaint the Jew with circumstances which that person was already informed of, it is necessary that this history retrograde, in

order that Master Henry's disappearance may be satisfactorily accounted for.

Master Henry was sitting in his chamber, in a very melancholy and lover-like mood. As he is not the hero of this book, and the chronicler, consequently, is not obliged to vindicate his conduct, it may be supposed that he was like other young men, and that, when a fair lady smiled, he was tolerably vain. Now, though he was sincerely and devotedly attached to the Lady Evaline Bohun, Master Henry was not proof to the more matronly, but haply more dazzling, charms of Dame Alice Perrers. He recollected that that lady, when he bade her farewell, had suffered such tender expressions to gush from her eyes, which he likened to the batteries of love, that he had been overcome with surprise and confusion; and he remembered, too, that when he raised her hand to his lips, and thereon imprinted a kiss, that hand, which was so fair, and round, and full, had trembled within his. It was very imprudent in Master Henry to recollect these things, which, if pleasant, were both dangerous and improper; but Master Henry, unfortunately, was no philosopher, and therefore he was not aware of the mischief which may be perpetrated by a small white hand and a lovely blue eye. But, as has been observed, he was thinking of these things, and looking very sad and melancholy, when the door of his chamber was thrown open, and the Jew mediciner entered.

Now there was nothing extraordinary in the Jew's appearance at this particular moment. At any other time, when he had his senses about him, Master Henry would scarcely have been surprised if he had come out of the wall; for without supposing that he had disposed of his soul to a certain trafficker in that kind of commodity, or even imputing to him any unbecoming familiarity with naughty demons, he firmly believed the Jew to be an adept in art magic, and consequently able to convey himself wherever he pleased on the shortest possible notice. On the present occasion, however, the sudden appearance of the mediciner, at a time when he was indulging forbidden thoughts, seemed to amaze him. He started from his seat, and grasped the hilt of his rapier, and then, as if ashamed of his discomposure, dropped again into his seat.

The Jew spoke never a word. He looked steadfastly in Master Henry's face; and there was a frown on his brow, and a flush on his cheek; but his step was firm, and his figure erect. Master Henry had a bold heart, but he could not sustain the steadfast gaze of the mediciner; he cast down his eyes, and looked confused.

"As I expected," muttered the Jew.

"And I prithee," asked the cavalier, hastily, "what expected you?"

"To see you stranded on the shore of Folly," replied the mediciner.

"Tut, a pin!" cried Master Henry. "You grow too familiar."

There was a pause, when the mediciner resumed:—"But I expected not, Sir Cavalier, that you would reject a pilot who proffered to bring you off the breakers."

"You speak in parables, Master Salmon," said the young cavalier. "'Tis a Hebrew mode of speech, I believe, but it tallies not with the openness of English purpose. Deliver your oracle in native phrase, and haply I will comprehend you."

"In native phrase, then," rejoined the Jew,—*"Dame Alice Perrers affections you."*

"You flatter me," said Master Henry, with becoming modesty.

"I meant it not, then," replied the mediciner, "but you broke my speech. I was about to say you were a double-dealer, and, consequently, a dishonoured gentleman."

Master Henry's cheeks burned with indignation. He half drew his rapier, but let it drop again into the sheath.

"You pass too much on my forbearance, sir," he said. "I forget not services you have done my sire——"

"Trifles," interrupted the Jew.

"And much favour you have shown me——"

"Crimes," said Master Salmon.

"Think you so?" cried the cavalier, as he paced the room impatiently. "Be our differences forgotten, father," he added, stopping short, and extending his hand.

The mediciner seized Master Henry's hand, and grasped it cordially.

"My son," he said, as he detained Master Henry's hand, "is not this hand, and your faith as a gentleman, already pledged? Have not I, by secret agencies which you wot not of, wrought 'to obtain you a suitable mistress—as fair a creature as ever walked? Out on you, Sir Cavalier, would you give your hand to one dame, and your heart to another—you, who are scarce a man yet?"

"Nay, father," replied Master Henry, "but there is a certain license——"

"License!" cried the mediciner, throwing down Master Henry's hand. "What mean you, sir?"

"I mean," said the cavalier, "that I am what you spoke me—a dishonoured gentleman."

"That shall you never be," replied the mediciner. "Think of your sire, who is ploughing the great sea, and hiding his nobility beneath a mean habit, and sorting with foul-mouthed mariners for very life. Think of yourself—a goodly cavalier, with a fair, fond, and noble mistress, and a stout heart and good sword. What think you of the wars, now?" And the mediciner caught up Master Henry's hand. "'Twere fitting you, my son, to visit the camp. A transport will leave Dover in a few days, with

troops for Calais; and, leaving me to settle matters here, you and Hubert Cromwell can steal away to-night."

"Think you Hubert will go, father?"

"He is even now making your preparations," replied the mediciner. "I informed him of my reasons, and conferred with him thereupon, and he is eager to start."

"Then I will bid you farewell, good mediciner," said Master Henry, shaking the Jew's hand.

That night Master Henry Sinclair and Hubert Cromwell disappeared from Leaden Hall. As, however, Dick was not aware of the circumstances that had induced their flight, and doubted not but that Sir Alfred Sinclair was some way concerned in it, he hastened to impart it to the mediciner. He was surprised, as well as vexed, at the coolness with which that person listened to his intelligence; and he was thinking that it would be as well not to divulge the errand which had taken him thither, when the mediciner inquired what had led him to Leaden Hall. Dick, not without some hesitation, explained.

"Was Simon Racket with you?" asked the mediciner.

"No, father," replied Dick. "I was bidden to tell the matter to none, and Master Simon was engaged elsewhere." And he related what had happened to the rattling mercer.

"I wish him joy, with all my heart," said the Jew, "and hope to see Rudleigh hanged. I will thither straight; and mind, my son, you go not to Dame Alice again."

And, taking up his cap, the mediciner sallied forth, leaving Dick to the care of Miriam.

Both these latter persons were becoming more attached to each other as their acquaintance progressed. Had they been of riper years, and under the same circumstances thrown so frequently together, their intimacy might have been dangerous; and even as matters were, considering how lasting are early impressions, and how enthusiastic and susceptible the generality of youthful minds, their fellowship, perhaps, was not politic. But these things are beyond human foresight, else how is it, or wherefore, that in the sweet season of youth, which gilds everything that it shines upon, and presents hopes as varied and as beautiful as the hues of the rainbow—how is it, or wherefore, that we then lay up in the storehouse of memory a heap of painful incidents—train fond recollections round ruined hopes, and often, after years of care and anxiety, twine weary and unrequited love round a lone and broken heart? But the chronicler must not anticipate events.

Dick was progressing rapidly under the tuition of his lovely instructress. He was already master of the alphabet, and his success in this first step up the ladder of letters made him more eager for further acquirements. Miriam, on her part, was delighted with her pupil, and strove her utmost to improve him.

"Dickon," she said, as she laid down the roll from which she

had been teaching him—volumes were at that time written on rolls of parchment or vellum—"Dickon," she said, as she laid down the unwieldy roll, and peered into his smiling face, "you will soon be a learned scholar."

"When will I equal you, mistress?"

"Soon, very soon," smiled Miriam, shaking her dark tresses.

"But, Dickon, when is Simon Racket to be wedded?"

"I know not, fair mistress," replied Dick. "The day, I believe, is not yet fixed."

"Is his mistress fair, Dickon?"

"Both fair and good," replied Dick. "I love her next to you and Mistress Alice."

"Then she must be good," said Miriam. "Have you been with them to-day?"

"No. I wished to see you first, mistress. But I must hie away, or Master Simon will think ill of me."

And Dick kissed Miriam's hand, and bounded down the stairs. He passed from the house, and hastened to Master Simon's lodgings; but as that person was abroad, and it was now growing late, he determined to return home, whither he forthwith repaired.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE DUEL.

OF A WEDDING AT WHICH DICK WHITTINGTON WAS A GUEST. OF A
CONFERENCE BETWEEN DICK WHITTINGTON AND MASTER SIMON
RACKET. OF A DUEL IN THE TOWER ROYAL.

MASTER SIMON RACKET, when his marriage with Mistress Eleanor was decided upon, was as happy as such a change of fortune could possibly make him. He did not, however, evince any disposition for noisy festivity, or, to use a modern though less classical term, spreeing, which, for some years previous, had procured him the appellation of Racketty. But this circumstance admits of a satisfactory explanation. He imagined, like a philosopher as he was, that such eccentricities, however innocent and becoming in the unhappy state of bachelorship, were not exactly the thing in a married man, who, as the sage of old had sagaciously remarked, should devote a portion of his time towards setting his house in order. This Master Simon inwardly resolved to do, and, though he had some vague notion that it was rather a woman's duty, he practised for an hour every morning on his household furniture, which he dusted and polished and set in order with admirable expertness. He moreover adopted, by way of preliminary to a more rigid deportment, that gravity of demeanour and sobriety of discourse which befitted so serious an occasion, and which, after conferring thereupon with the mediciner, he was resolved to maintain through life. This was an excellent resolution, and would doubtless have led to many important results, spiritual as well as temporal, but for one solitary reason—Master Simon's inability to adhere to it. He contrived, nevertheless, to drag through several days with a very respectable face, though it was evident, as the wedding-day drew nigh, that his respectability of aspect would soon undergo a metamorphosis.

At length, about a week after the events detailed in the last chapter, the wedding-day of Master Simon and Mistress Eleanor dawned. The chronicler, if he pleased, could expatiate on the fineness of the weather, the habiliments of the bridal party, the beauty and modesty of the bride, the gallantry and boldness of the bridegroom, and a variety of other matters equally interesting; but it may be sufficient to affirm, as solemnly as a few words will

allow, that all things passed off with *eclat*. The bride and bridegroom were wedded in the chapel of the Tower Royal, and received the nuptial benediction from the mouth of Dame Alice's chaplain, who, if he were not a downright Lollard, was at least a Lancastrian, and therefore acceptable in the eyes of Master Simon. It would be tedious to enter into the festivity that succeeded the marriage ceremony; and therefore, leaving these things to the imagination of the reader, the chronicler will pass on to the nuptial evening, when a snug party had assembled at Master Simon's lodgings.

The apartment in which the company were located was capacious in its dimensions, and if such a measure had been desirable, and consistent with the privacy which ought to characterize weddings, would have afforded accommodation to a greater number of inmates. The wainscot was of beech, as was also the ceiling. In one corner was a recess, partitioned from the room by a curtain of baize, which curtain concealed the various conveniences that were deposited within. The settles were of elm, seated with rushes, and were placed round a small and circular oak table, that stood in front of the fire. The table was garnished with several platters, which were loaded with apples and pears, bridal-cake and nuts—three or four leather flasks, containing wine and metheglin; and six glasses, corresponding in number to the persons who sat around. The celestial herb—tobacco, was as yet unknown in this country, or it would doubtless have formed a delicate addition to Master Simon's feast.

The bridegroom sat between his bride and her mother, and Miriam Salmon sat between her father and Dick Whittington, and these persons constituted the festive party. Miriam and Dick were amusing themselves with two respectable-looking pieces of bride-cake, which had just been handed to them by the good-natured bride, when the mediciner arose, and having filled the glasses of the full-grown with wine, and the glasses of the juveniles with metheglin, proposed the health of Dame Eleanor Racket.

"I am the more proudful of this," said Master Simon, laying down his glass, and grasping the Jew's hand, "because you herein set an example to bigots to relax their prejudices. 'T is not, as I am awares, the custom of your nation to drink pledges, yet have you drank to me and mine. And now, father, in return for your good wishes, I will give you a pledge, which, if it fall out well, will go far to franchise they of your belief, and which, as from a celestial heart in a nation's bosom, will diffuse through the veins of all creeds the sweet stream of religious liberty. This, I aver, is the spring of all freedom, and, feeling this, I pledge you to the weal of the Reformed Church."

"You push me hard, brother Simon," returned the Jew. "I know what you say to be true, and think the doctrines of Sir John

Wickliffe, your high priest, insure protection to all who dissent ; but still, Simon, you know that I am no believer in your Christian creed. Howbeit, as I love you, and am ready to fight for this Reformed Church, feeling that next to my own it is the best, I will pledge you to its political weal."

"Now, Dickon," said Master Simon, perceiving that Dick did not appear to relish this toast, "thou look'st sour. Tut, my gaffer, wilt clench thy teeth at a pledge, or shut thy mouth to bride-cake. Cheer thee up, boy ; and we will no more of these ware."

"Right, Simon," remarked Dame Eleanor Racket, "such pledges suit not among Christian people. To free us from such mar-joys, and restore our merry humour, prithee sing a song, Dickon."

"I will, fair dame," cried Dick. "Thou shalt have

The Hearth of Home.

"The hearth of home, by heart of truth,
 Above all else is prized ;
 For in its round, in early youth,
 Were all our joys comprised.
 The hearth of native home !
 The hearth !
 The hearth of native home !

There will you sit, on wintry night,
 While ghostly tale is told,
 And forms and faces, wove of light,
 The crackling logs unfold.
 The hearth, &c.

And there, of yore, did dam and sire,
 And sisters, brothers meet ;
 And though they're gone, though quench'd the fire,
 The mem'ry still is sweet.
 The hearth, &c.

And if we can, before we die,
 Another hearth attain,
 Why, woman's voice and woman's eye
 Will 'liven it again.
 The hearth, &c.

And we can then recal the day
 That time will ne'er restore,
 And kinsmen dead, and friends away,
 Whose hearths we loved of yore.
 The hearth, &c."

"'Tis true," said Master Simon, when Dick had finished his song, "and thou hast celebrated the circumstance in good tune."

"He has sung it sweetly," murmured Miriam, pressing Dick's hand. "Wilt not thou afford a song, Master Simon?"

"Ay, pretty Mistress," replied Master Simon; "and, since thou hast asked so gently, will sing thee one which thou hast never heard."

This declaration was applauded by all the company, and having disposed of a cup of wine, and cleared his throat with two preliminary *a-hems*, Master Simon began thus :—

The Changes of Love.

"Love hath seasons like to Time,
And varied as the fickle year;
Smiles in winter, and in prime
Of summer sometimes sheds a tear.
In his spring, like April day,
His face is oft obscured by showers;
Summer comes, like joyous May,
And then he dwells among the flowers.

Autumn, though it steals his tints,
May not beyond the leaf distress;
Like the oak he mocks the dints
That Time would on his heart impress:
And when winter draweth nigh,
And dashes o'er his upright crest,
Then he bends, without a sigh,
Upon a sympathizing breast.

Love, then, maiden, is the star
That cheers us in our pilgrimage;
And thy smiles and kisses are
The music surest to engage.
Maiden, come, then, to my heart,
For Love is in his summer now;
And we'll wed ere he depart
With beauty, hope, and passion's glow."

Master Simon, while he was singing the last stanza, insinuated his arm round the taper waist of his bride, and pressed her little hand against his heart, and Dame Eleanor, unconsciously returning the pressure of his hand, gazed steadfastly at the old wainscot opposite, not because the old wainscot had anything particular in its aspect, but because she wished to avoid the eyes of her guests. Miriam and Dick began to converse apart, though, as they spoke with their mouths full of cake, it were strange if they understood each other, and the mediciner and Dame Price were interchanging civilities, and speaking in an under tone, when a stentorian voice was heard without.

"So ho, there! Master Simon Racket! So ho! So ho!"

"Who is this noisy fellow?" asked the Jew. "I prithee, Simon, let me answer him."

"No, no," said Master Simon. "I think I know his speech. Sit you still, Sir Mediciner."

Master Simon rose, and sallied forth. He closed the door after him, and descended the stairs, and having no light, nearly fell over a person who was ascending, and whom he discovered to be the gaunt falconer from the Tower Royal.

"Hilloa you," cried the falconer. "Give me sword-room, you curmudgeon, you ale-tippler, you Jack o' the dark."

"I beg grace," replied Master Simon. "It is I, Simon Racket."

"Now, good Gaffer Simon," said the falconer, "was it you I gave such scurvy terms to? I will give you satisfaction, Simon. Draw your rapier, and we will even fight i' the dark."

"No, no, Sir Falconer, I have satisfaction in thy apology. But what hath brought thee hither so late?"

"I come on your obligation, good Simon," continued the falconer. "I wish to do you favours; and that scurvy steward, who is prisoned in the Tower Real, is willing on my persuasion. Thus it is, then; you have personal wrongs from this caitiff, and wherefore, when you carry rapier, should gallows do your revenge?"

"I take you," said Master Simon. "You think I would be glad for the duello?"

"Glad," returned the falconer; "to-be-sure thou wilt; and I will swear you by yea and no, and by all that men of honour practise, that if he kills you, I will do my best to kill him after."

"Thy hand on 't," said Master Simon, grasping the falconer's hand. "But how will we fare for the lists? Is not he in prison?"

"Is not he in prison!" echoed the falconer; "to-be-sure he is. Then leave, I beseech you, the contrivances to me. Am not I in charge? have not I responsibilities, keys, rapiers? And am not I your seconds, and his seconds, and seconds to both of you?"

"Thou speakest sooth," said Master Simon.

"Go to, then!" rejoined the falconer. "I like thy mettle well, and 't is hard that thou shouldst be pitted against this knave. But, to speak you comfort, though he be a knave, he is a master of fence; and thou wilt stand as fair a chance of being run through the body by him as thou wouldst by a better man."

Having delivered himself of this oracle, which would, he thought, remove from Master Simon's mind all disinclination to the proposed duel, even if he had entertained the strongest objections originally, the falconer shook Master Simon cordially by the hand, and groped his way down the stairs. Master Simon returned to his own chamber; and shortly afterwards the party assembled there separated for the night.

It was not yet ten o'clock, but, notwithstanding that he had obtained permission from Mistress Alice, Dick Whittington, on

returning home, received a severe beating from the cook for remaining out so late. Covered with weals, the effect of this brutal correction, he ascended to his garret, and sobbed himself to sleep.

What boy, who has once been acquainted with it, can ever forget the cruel cane, which, as those persons who have tasted both will know, is such an improvement on the stinging properties of the birch? What man, meditating on a cane, but will associate it straightway with some innocent memory of boyhood—such as robbing an orchard, breaking bounds, or the declension of substantives? Those persons who have such fond reminiscences of early canes, which come upon them like the light of other days, will be able to enter into what, without poetical flourish, may be termed the wounded feelings of our hero, when, on the morning after the wedding-day of Master Simon, he rose from his hard couch. It would be vain, as no sympathy could be expected, to describe them to people who have never suffered from similar outrages, and the chronicler, therefore, will pass them over without remark.

But Dick's feelings forced themselves on his own consideration throughout the day. He was, however, somewhat reconciled to them by eventide, when Master Simon, as he had promised on the preceding night, summoned him forth.

The two friends walked on in silence, down Cornhill and Cheapside, to Smoothfield—then, as its name imported, a level and open field—now called Smithfield. They sat down in one corner, on a stone which served as a pound for cattle, and still remained silent; for Dick saw that something weighed on his friend's mind, and he waited for him to begin the conversation.

"Dick," said Master Simon at length, "give me your hand. There, boy, you know I love you."

"I know you do, sir," returned Dick, standing up, for the caning of the preceding night made sitting for any length of time uncomfortable.

"Well, sit down, Dick."

Dick sat down, wincing.

"I have brought you out, Dick," said Master Simon, "because I know no other whom I could trust so well. The mediciner—in sooth, a good fellow—would haply seek to overrule me with his objections, and preach to me of discretion. I have therefore brought you; and to you, Dick, if ill should fall, I trust my last love to my bride."

"What mean you, Master Simon?" asked Dick, stooping his head, and looking up anxiously in his friend's face.

"You will see," returned Master Simon, "for you shall with me at dusk. But, to speak of my love,—tell her my last word was Eleanor."

No answer from Dick.

"Was there ever such a sniveller?" exclaimed Master Simon. "Wherefore are you twisting my hand so? I tell you all will be right. I have measured distances with him before, and I have practised with my weapon."

"Whom fight you?"

"Rudleigh," replied the mercer. "If I fight him not now, he will be hanged, and gallows will step between my enemy and me."

"And gallows were a fit interposer," said Dick. "Wherefore, kind sir, should you peril life and conscience, and the happiness of your sweet spouse, with an enemy who is claimed by the hangman?"

"Now, Dick," returned the other, "seek not to play Master Salmon with me, else I must leave you in dudgeon. I have to keep my own account with heaven, without a priest to reckon my misdeeds, and charge me testers therefore. Cease your arguings, then, and listen to my speech. Tell Eleanor to be your mother."

"Oh, you must not."

"Now, I will give you a crack directly," said Master Simon, turning his head aside, in order that Dick might not see a tear that trickled down his cheek. "You're a fool. I care not a fig for you."

Dick only pressed Master Simon's hand, and Master Simon pressed his in return, and swore that he hated him.

"'T is hard," said Master Simon, "that a poor fellow is to be bullied out of his wits in this fashion. Come, come, I'll say no more. Get up, now; for 't will be dark by the time we reach the Tower Royal."

And Master Simon rose, longing for the moment which would place him in the lists with his enemy. Let not his disposition be too hastily condemned; for in that age, be it remembered, the duel was not only considered legitimate by the state, but recognized as a direct appeal to the justice of heaven by the established church. That so barbarous an institution should still prevail—that cold-blooded malice and diabolical hate should be allowed to perpetrate such enormities *now*—that that which is so damnable a sin in the eyes of heaven, and so direct and contumacious an infringement of human laws—which, in fact, is resorted to, not from any regard to the psuedo punctilios of honour, but from a cowardly and brutal deference to the coxcomb world—that this infamous practice still exists, and in England, is perhaps owing to one man, who, when he was placed above all others by his matchless deeds, when his name was written on the page of history in the brightest characters that the muse could trace, when he was lauded as the warrior and statesman and patriot, suffered the blot of a duel to drop on his lucid scutcheon.

Master Simon Racket had no such precedent before him, but his conduct was in keeping with the dark times in which he lived.

He walked along slowly, talking to Dick as he progressed, and by the time they had reached the Tower Royal, though the distance was not great, it was quite dark. They found the falconer waiting for them at the gate. Leading them through a dark passage which undermined the rampart, he brought them out in an inner court, where he gave Dick two torches. He soon ignited these, having previously provided a lucific apparatus; and thrusting Dick and Master Simon into a door-way, of which he had the key, he demanded Master Simon's rapier. This he mated with another, which he took from a rack within the passage, and then led on his two visitors.

They descended a flight of stairs composed of stone, yet so worn as to be both slippery and dangerous; but by the help of a sort of conductor, which ran down on one side, they contrived to reach the bottom unhurt. They passed thence into a large and dark room, whence several cells and passages branched off.

Returning Master Simon his rapier, and taking a key from his girdle, the falconer unlocked one of the cell doors, and called its inmate forth. Rudleigh, who was the occupant of the cell, immediately came out, and darted a fierce look at Master Simon, who returned it with interest. The falconer then presented Rudleigh with his weapon, and having stationed Dick with a torch on one side of the room, and placed himself with another torch opposite, he bade the combatants set-to.

There could not be a better matched duel. Each with vigilant and wary eye watched his antagonist, yet an inexperienced swordsman could scarcely have followed the weapons. There was the feint, the allonge, the stoccado, and the stive;—there was, as Master Simon would have said, the puntos, alto, reverso, and thrusto, yet neither of the combatants received a wound. Clash went the weapons, and, as they clashed and clashed again, a round of oaths, by way of applause, would burst from the falconer, who, if he was not an efficient, was at least an impartial second.

"Mind your guard, Master Rudleigh," he cried. "Now, Master Racket, look to your allonge. Soh, boys! Good! Now, gallants, be not too long, for 't is cold work standing by. Have at him, Simon! Bravely done, Rudleigh! No—no—no.—By 'r Lady, you've drilled a hole through his body!"

And the falconer ran to the assistance of Rudleigh, who, uttering a faint groan, fell bleeding to the ground.

"Comfort, man," said the falconer. "'T will soon be over, I promise thee."

"Alas!" faintly articulated the sufferer.

"Canst not take comfort?" asked the falconer. "Will not there be three of us hanged for thee, and is not that a sufficiency?"

"Hush, he is dying!" cried Master Simon, putting his arms under Rudleigh, and holding up his head and shoulders.

The dying man moved his lips, as though he wished to speak,

and Master Simon bent his ear to his mouth, in the hope that he might be able to make out his wants. He heard him mutter "*Ora pro nobis*," and the word "priest," and he told him to supplicate his Redeemer, who, in order that none should despair, had pardoned the thief on the cross.

"Master Racket is a good fellow," said the falconer to Dick, as he marked Master Simon's attentions to the dying man; "but he hath his faults, boy. He hath excellent skill at his weapon, will drink you good wine like a fish, play you cricket for love, beat you at quoits, throw you at the wrestle, and yet, maugre all these good qualities, he is somewhat careful for religion. 'T is a pity, too."

Here the falconer's discourse (not one word of which had been heard by Dick) was interrupted by a hoarse rattle in the throat of Rudleigh. It was evidently his last struggle—and how terrible it was! Dick turned away his head, for he could not abide the livid horror, the quaking remorse, the deadly agony that stood out on that ghastly face. His hair was on end, as though every solitary hair were wire, and he seemed, as he moved his hands backwards and forwards before him, to be clutching at those feathery appearances which are set down in the *Facies Hippocratica*. Even the falconer, who never gave a thought to death, was silenced as the last sad note of life was rattled out; and the beads of cold sweat that rolled slowly down his face, and the fixed intensity of his stare, showed that Master Simon was not unconcerned.

"'T is all over," said Master Simon, extending the body on the ground. "God have mercy on me—a murderer!"

"Comfort, man, comfort," observed the falconer; "'t is not exactly murder. I have killed my three men at the duello, allowed by the code of consequence, and should like to hear a fellow, save thyself, call it otherwise than honourable fighting. Besides, as this affair was done underhand, we shall make our atonements. We will be hanged, Simon; and there's an end of 't, and of us too."

"This reconciles me not," replied Master Simon. "But what shall we do with the corse?"

"Place it on my shoulders," said the falconer. "Come hither to-morrow, and we will impart the event to Dame Alice. She may be disposed to beg us off."

Raising the body of the deceased, and placing the arms round the falconer's neck, Master Simon assisted to remove it to the inner court afore mentioned. Dick preceded them with a torch, which, on reaching the court, he extinguished. They entered a narrow archway, which had no door, and descended a flight of steps, where was a door bolted and barred. Dick, by the direction of the falconer, removed the fastenings and opened the door, which disclosed a second greece of steps, descending to the river.



*The Duel by torch-light.
in the Dungeons of the Tower-Real.*

The river was near high water, so that a boat that was moored alongside, ready for immediate use, was afloat. In this they deposited the body, together with one of the steps, which happened to be loose, and then stepped into the boat themselves. Dick took the rudder, and Master Simon and the falconer an oar each, and the boat moved silently from the shore. They had gone about a boat's length, and were preparing to give quicker way, when they were challenged by the sentinel on the marine rampart—

"Who goes there?"

"A friend," replied the falconer.

"The watchword?"

"Water."

"Pass on:—all's well."

They pulled in an oblique direction up the river, and stopped not till they had reached the centre, nearly opposite the Savoy. Here the falconer bade Master Simon stay his oar.

"We must drop our load here," he said. "Necessity commands us."

"But my conscience is reluctant," said Master Simon.

"Credit me, then," replied the falconer, "thy conscience is both a coward and a traitor. 'Self-preservation,' says the vicar, when he comforts himself with the sacrament wine, 'is the first law of nature.' So here goes."

The falconer stooped down into the boat, and with the help of Master Simon, who could not deny the policy of the measure, wrapped the stone step—which, as has been before observed, they brought with them—in the garments of Rudleigh, and tossed him into the river. Near to the very spot which he had bade Dame Price mark, in the same dark water in which he had threatened to plunge his victim,—without a sigh or tear or prayer, without a solitary formality or farewell, without the commonest rag of funeral furniture, without so much as a shroud to deck him for the fish, the remains of the miscreant Rudleigh were consigned to their grave. Never a bell knelled for him—for him no consecrated priest, either of his own church or that which, like a phoenix, was to rise from the ashes of its own martyrs, ever interceded; no green turf or flowers covered him, no memorial or epitaph marked his sepulchre; but he sank, and rotted and dissolved in condign and inconceivable oblivion.

"Poor devil," said the falconer, as he watched the rippling circle which the immersion of Rudleigh's body had created, "I fear me you've gone to a warm country. Give way, brother Simon, and I will land you at the bridge stairs."

Master Simon gave way, and the boat shot fleetly through the water. They soon reached the stairs of London Bridge, near the spot where the Fishmongers' Hall now stands; and Master Simon and Dick, having taken leave of the falconer, ascended the stairs. They proceeded in silence to Leadenhall street, where Dick parted

with Master Simon. He did not, however, gain admission into his master's house, which was closed, and he therefore repaired to the domicile of the mediciner. He knocked at the door, and was straightway admitted by the Jew, to whom he unfolded the events of the night. Miriam had been some time in bed; and stretching himself on some cushions, in a closet to which he was introduced by the Jew, Dick disposed himself to sleep.

CHAPTER XIX. THE FLIGHT.

OF DICK WHITTINGTON'S FLIGHT FROM THE HOUSE OF MASTER FITZWARREN.

DICK WHITTINGTON returned to his master's house early on the following morning. He had the satisfaction of learning, on the evening of that day, that Dame Alice Perrers had promised her protection to Master Simon Racket and the falconer, and in a few days, during which Master Simon confined himself to his lodgings, the duel in which Rudleigh had been killed was very prudently hushed up. It was fortunate both for Master Simon and the falconer, that Dame Alice Perrers acted in this matter with her usual promptitude, else the death of Edward the Third, which happened on the 25th of June, and which entirely destroyed her political influence, would have left them exposed to the interference of the law. The accession of Richard the Second to the throne, notwithstanding that the Duke of Lancaster still held the most influential position in the regency, left that lady open to the animosity of a virulent and bigoted faction, by whom, at length, she was committed a prisoner to the Tower of London. There, for the present, this history will leave her; and though it hath hitherto, like a tortoise, moved tardily on, without missing one of those incidents which tradition hath associated with its hero, it is now necessary that the chronicler, throwing off the fetters of composition, expedite his passage down the stream of time.

Dick's avocations, though anything but agreeable, did not irk him, for he had always in perspective two visits which he paid to Miriam and Master Simon every evening; and the prospect of seeing his friends when his work was over, and the sanguine temperament with which he was endued, would have supported him under more arduous labour. One thing, indeed, caused him much uneasiness, and that was the company which resorted to his dormitory at night. But for this, and the constant ill-treatment that he sustained from Dame Williams, he would have been contented; for though he was ambitious, and an aspirant for greater respectability of station, he believed, as Master Simon affirmed, that "perseverance accomplisheth many things," and that time would advance him according to his deserts. In this opinion he was

confirmed by Master Simon, who proposed also to teach him the craft of a mercer. Master Simon, indeed, was not a master-tradesman himself, and therefore was not in want of, nor able to maintain, an apprentice; but he was a freeman of the city, and any one who served an apprenticeship to him, and chose to set up in business afterwards, would likewise be entitled to his freedom.

"I can't afford to provender you, Dick," he said, "so you will continue in Master Fitzwarren's service. I will have indentures made, I promise you, and you shall have an hour's teaching every night."

This, with the instruction he received from Miriam, opened the door to that independence which Dick so much coveted. He became more than ever reconciled to his situation, for if the ill-usage of the cook vexed and discouraged him, he was cheered and emboldened by the kindness of Mistress Alice. But Fortune, that fickle and incontinent female, had other trials in store for him.

Mistress Alice Fitzwarren possessed a carcanet, or necklace, made of small gold beads, which she always wore in memory of her mother. On one occasion, when giving directions to Dame Williams, she had taken it off, and having laid it down on the dresser, retired from the kitchen without it. About an hour after, remembering the circumstance, she descended to the kitchen to recover it. The necklace, however, was not there. A search was forthwith commenced, and dishes, and platters, and beakers, places likely and unlikely, strictly examined; but in vain, no carcanet was visible. This was too great a loss to be sustained in silence, and Mistress Alice, consequently, mentioned it to her father, who, swearing that he was entertaining thieves in his house, descended to the kitchen to institute an inquiry.

Master Fitzwarren maintained one domestic only besides Dame Williams and Dick. This was an old woman, who, in modern parlance, would be designated a maid-of-all-work. She was of a quiet disposition, and a taciturn, which was owing alike to her incorrigible deafness and her invincible stupidity. She was not wanting in good nature, for she had often given Dick his supper when it was denied him by the cook; but whether it was that she feared to offend the latter person, or that, as she expressed herself, "she did not like to run her nose into other people's puddings!" she never interfered between Dame Williams and Dick. Indeed, on the contrary, she used frequently to make use of the venerable proverb, "spare the rod—spoil the child," which is so often used as an apology for cruelty to children; and her discourse generally was intermixed with sayings of equal repute and amiability.

This old woman and Dick were engaged at their respective avocations, and taking no notice of the loquacity of Dame Williams, when Master Fitzwarren and his daughter entered the kitchen.

"Ho you!" cried Master Fitzwarren, "have you searched thoroughly for my daughter's carcanet?"

"Aye, sir," answered Dame Williams and Dick. Dame Grammont, being deaf, did not comprehend Master Fitzwarren's inquiry.

"And you," cried Master Fitzwarren in the ear of Dame Grammont, "have you searched?"

"Aye, sir, that's true indeed," replied Dame Grammont; "Search, and thou shalt find."

"The deuce take the woman!" exclaimed Master Fitzwarren. "Hast thou," he added, in a louder tone, "experienced this?"

"Yes, indeed, sir," returned Dame Grammont, in a low voice—she always spoke low, as deaf people generally do, because she was anxious to conceal her infirmity. "Yes, indeed, sir, that's what I always say—'Experience maketh a fool wise.'"

"Hast seen the carcanet?" vociferated Master Fitzwarren.

"Aye, in sooth, 'seeing's believing,'" replied Dame Grammont. "But you needn't bawl so—I'm not deaf."

"Was ever the like of this heard?" shouted Master Fitzwarren. "'T would try the patience of Job."

"True, your worship, 'patience is a great virtue,'" returned Dame Grammont.

Master Fitzwarren, though irritated at her stupidity, perceived that he would be unable to elicit any information from Dame Grammont, whose dulness was *proverbial*, and he therefore confined his inquiries to Dame Williams and Dick. Both of these latter persons protested, in the most solemn manner, that they had not seen the missing carcanet; but the cook said, and Master Fitzwarren surmised, that Dick knew more of it than he chose to avow. Dick saw that he was suspected, but as he saw also that the eyes of Mistress Alice held him innocent, and as, moreover, he was conscious of his integrity, he heard the suspicion expressed without betraying emotion. He did not, however, feel it the less. He spoke not, not even to refute the calumny, for he was so hurt that he could not speak, but he pondered deeply. He longed for the advent of night, in order that he might retire to his garret, and there, secure from interruption, relieve his oppressed heart by an effusion of tears.

And night came at last. Dick visited neither Master Simon nor the Jew, for though he believed that they would never doubt his honesty, he felt ashamed to tell them how he was situated. Miriam, too—how could he tell her? No; he thought 'twere better to leave them all; better to lose their kind countenance, their sweet counsel—better even to lose their good opinion, than to stand before them a reputed thief. He resolved, as he disposed himself for sleep, to rise with the first dawn of day, and to quit, for the quiet valley of Taunton Deans, the busy and heartless metropolis. He fell asleep and dreamt of poverty and wretched-

ness, of happiness and wealth; and thought, as he looked at the tattered garments in which fancy had robed him, and the paltry portion which fate had assigned him, that it was a grievous sin to be clad in rags, and a deadly crime to be poor. He only thought like the rest of the world; his creed is still that of the throned monarch and the work-house pauper—the lie, the shallow lie, and vile and contemptible prejudice of universal man. The lion's coat is shaggy, and that of the tiger magnificent and smooth; but which is the nobler animal? And is the tulip, which wears so flaunting a coat, and which requires so much care and nursing from the gardener, is it so dearly prized as the forget-me-not, which grows wild by the roadside, and displays gold in its heart only?

But poverty, certainly, is not a desirable acquaintance, for it hath a cold hand, a black brow, and an iron heart; and so thought Dick when, on the next morning, he rose with the first light. It was the morning of All-Hallowmass, and all nature was rejoicing, as, on a festival so solemn, the church commanded all good Catholics to do. Dick, however, was in no mood to conform to this injunction, but having hastily dressed himself, and taken up a small bundle and stick which he had provided overnight, stole softly forth from his master's habitation.

Having attached his bundle, which contained some broken victuals, to the end of his stick, he rested the latter on his left shoulder, and trudged along the road to Aldgate. Here, though the gate was open, he was arrested by one of the warders, who, as several apprentices had lately absconded from their masters, and Dick's appearance and the earliness of the hour excited suspicion, thought it politic to question him.

"Whither away, boy?" he asked. "Art tired of thy honest craft, that thy god-fathers and god-mothers bound thee to?"

Dick paused a moment. "I am for the country," he said, at length. "I have been in service here, but am not bounden to stay."

"No, no, thou'rt not, boy," said another warder whom the noise had drawn forth from the lodge. "Get thee on thy way, and give thee good morrow."

"Good morrow, kind sir," replied Dick, and passed on out of the city of London.

CHAPTER XX. THE RETURN.

IN WHICH THE HERO RETURNS TO THE METROPOLIS.

"AND whither shall I bend my steps now?" said Dick to himself.

He was ascending Highgate hill, and being weary with his walk, and anxious, before he proceeded further, to reflect seriously on his situation, he sat down on a mile-stone, which, from that day to this, is known as—

Whittington's Ston.

It stands by the way-side, as you go up to Highgate arch, near to the elegant and commodious alms-houses which he afterwards founded. The wayfarer is at once struck by the tasteful exterior of the latter; and if he pause to survey them, and inquire their purpose of a passing traveller, he will be surprised to learn that they are DICK WHITTINGTON'S ALMS-HOUSES.

There was a churchyard in his rear. He happened to turn round, and, laying his bundle and stick on the ground, glanced vacantly over the resting place of mortality. That vacant glance was soon exchanged for one of intelligence. No one, indeed, can enter the sanctified precincts of human rottenness—rottenness that, even in death, covers itself with sweet-smelling flowers, and seems, while bedded in the cold, damp clay, to demonstrate, by the fertility of the surface, that humanity, though dead, is still seconding nature—that though the handiwork of the Handiworker, who had endued him with beautiful feelings and lofty senses, who had given him power over all that dwelt on the earth and in the air and in the waters, was laying senseless and lifeless there, yet the flowers and the green turf grew over him, and seemed, in the mute language of beauty, to say to the monuments which affection had reared, and which time had crumbled, "Ruins! ye would perpetuate his might, while we, less proud, would remember his innocence only; and yet, weak memorials though we be, God stands forth in our loveliness as man totters in your frailty!" No one can enter on such a scene, remembering that he must one

day repose there, and render up his dead brain, now the seat of an immortal spirit, to regale the long, slippery, creeping, tortive worm—no one can do this without thinking that life is like a midnight dream, and that all man's inventions and pursuits and vicissitudes, all his hopes and fears and pains—all his trials and schemes and speculations, are like the morbid creations of a distempered fancy. "And surely," thought Dick, "there is comfort in this reflection; for the weary dreamer, who is covered with rags only, hath the same guardian as the haughty noble, whose costly coverlet is so often oppressed by ambition; and in our very restlessness, which will not suffer us to remain long in one position, we may discover a type of the immortal life of which the grave is the gaping threshold."

"But what music is that?" asked Dick, starting from his reverie.

'T was old Bow Bells. They were chiming merrily indeed, for it was the high festival of All-Hallowtide, and on the morrow, as is still enjoined by the Church of Rome, mass would be celebrated for all souls. Dick listened attentively to the chime, which, though he could scarcely credit his senses, seemed to say,—

"Turn again, turn again, Whittington!
Three times Lord Mayor of London!"

"Surely," he thought, "imagination is playing me a trick. What an impossible thing is this! *Lord Mayor*, too! Why, no such office is known! Mayor, forsooth, might chance, but——"

"Turn again, turn again, Whittington!
Three times Lord Mayor of London!"

What folly! And yet it was not such great folly either, for who could say what industry and perseverance might accomplish? It seemed so curious, too, that this delusion, if delusion it were, should come over him at that moment, when his thoughts were occupied by other matters. Was it not, moreover, very strange, when there was no such dignity, that the chime should expressly say *Lord Mayor*, and—which was still more mysterious—that the prediction should run in rhyme? But, to banish such an absurdity at once, he would, he thought, just consider his situation; and if it was possible that he, a suspected thief——

"Why!" he exclaimed, "I am about to justify suspicion! I am, in sooth, running away from inquiry! And what will Mistress Alice, and Master Simon, and Miriam, say? Why, if they even say nothing, they must at least think me an ingrate, and, belike, a thief. Where will I find me such friends as they?"

The tears rolled heavily down his cheeks, and throwing himself on his knees, and clasping his hands over the stone that had served him for a seat, he besought Providence to lead him

whithersoever it deemed best. As he rose from his knees, and took up his bundle and stick, Bow Bells again addressed him :

“ Turn again, turn again, Whittington !
Three times Lord Mayor of London ! ”

“ And if I be three times Lord Mayor,” said Dick, as he turned again towards London, “ the prophecy of Bow Bells, that made me soar so high, shall outlast London town.”

Being anxious to reach his master's house before the inmates rose, so that, on the descent of the household, his excursion might not be suspected, he pushed forwards at a hearty pace, and soon reached Aldgate. As he was hastening through the gate he encountered Master Simon Racket.

“ Whither hast thou been so early, Dickon ? ” asked Master Simon.

“ I will tell thee anon, worthy sir,” replied Dick. “ It may be enough to say, now, that I have repented me. Hast heard of the loss that fair Mistress Alice hath sustained ? ”

“ Aye,” answered Master Simon ; “ and have heard, besides, that suspicions have been fixed on thee. But what of this ? We must all, as worthy Master Smith says, have our misadventures. To speak sooth, though, Dick, I should like well to have this mystery unravelled ; and, if you list, will accompany you home for that end.”

“ You are my good friend, fair sir,” said Dick, grasping his hand.

“ Are you advised o' that ? ” asked Master Simon, returning the pressure of his hand. “ Well, then, we will onward.”

Dick had not made so much haste but that the inmates were all astir before he reached Master Fitzwarren's house. Master Fitzwarren himself, as well as his fair daughter, were in the kitchen ; and, on his entry, the former person asked Dick whither he had been rambling. Dick looked significantly at Master Simon.

“ He has been conferring with me, your worship,” said Master Simon.

“ Then we must excuse him,” returned the merchant ; “ in especial as unjust suspicions have been fixed upon him, concerning, as you are aware, this unlucky carcanet.”

“ You have found it, then ? ” said Master Simon.

“ Aye,” replied Mistress Alice, whose eyes were red with recent weeping. “ I was certain Dick had it not. I took it from the dresser myself, and placed it in my vest, where, when I disarrayed last even, I found it.”

“ Our Lady be thanked ! ” exclaimed Dick.

“ A thankful man is worth a king's ransom,” observed Dame Grammont, who had overheard the last word of Dick's exclamation

"Well, this being disposed of," said Master Fitzwarren, "we will to business."

And, preceded by Mistress Alice, and followed by Master Simon, the worthy merchant quitted the kitchen, smiling, as he passed him, in acknowledgment of Dick's obeisance.

Dick had not been long engaged at his avocations, at which, in order to compensate for the time he had lost, he plied with unusual diligence, when, happening to turn towards the door, he espied Mistress Alice, who beckoned him to follow her. He accordingly watched his opportunity, and when the attention of Dames Williams and Grammont was otherwise engaged, stole softly from the kitchen, and followed his young mistress up stairs.

"You are very cruel, Dickon," said Mistress Alice, as Dick entered the chamber to which she had preceded him.

"Wherefore, fair mistress?" asked Dick.

"To think of running away—without so much as saying farewell, too."

Dick coloured. "Are you advised of that?" he asked.

"Aye: Master Simon told me 't was so, he was sure; and said it came of my carelessness."

"He is a meddler, I promise you, mistress," said Dick. "I will have talk with him.—But, no, he is a worthful friend, I warrant. He spoke in haste, fair mistress."

"I have none to take my part," sobbed Mistress Alice. "Nay, now, I know *thou* would'st, Dick. Turn not thy head away. I wanted to ask thy grace."

"For why?" asked Dick.

"For bringing such suspicion on thee."

"But you suspected me not?"

"Our Lady forefend!" replied Mistress Alice.

"Then what reck I for suspicion?" returned Dick. "I trow I stood acquitted with you, mistress, and that is all I cared for. Our Lady shield you!"

And as he kissed the hand of his mistress, and turned from her presence, it occurred to Dick that that hand might one day be his own.

In the evening he repaired to the domicile of Master Simon Racket. As he was ascending the stairs, on his way to Master Simon's chamber, he thought that he heard some one retreating down the passage.

"Who is there?" he asked, in a low tone.

"Dickon," replied Master Simon, as he caught him by the arm, "I know your voice. Hither, for I have somewhat to discuss with you."

Dick descended the stairs till he reached a sharp angle, where, yielding to the grasp of Master Simon, he came to a halt.

"You remember," whispered the mercer, "the sanctified bigot of Highgate,—Sir Ambrose Pollard?"

"I have cause," replied Dick.

"He is in my chamber now," said Master Simon. "He is rebuking my wife for loving me, and threatening to consign her to hell if she do not quit me straight."

"Wherefore does he this?"

"Because," replied Master Simon, "Rudleigh was one of his flock, and having heard from him that I was a heretic, he fears my wife will soon cease to be a Roman."

"Are you surely advertised of this?" asked Dick.

"Surely," rejoined Master Simon. "The mediciner is even now in the chamber, secreted behind the baize curtain, and I have myself been listening at the door."

"And there is none who can prove heresy on you, sir?"

"None, Dick," replied Master Simon, "and therefore, if you be so minded, you can now requite this priest your reckoning with him."

"How?" asked Dick.

"Follow me," said Master Simon.

They again ascended the stairs, and, stealing thence down the passage afore mentioned, proceeded on tip-toe to Master Simon's chamber. The door was ajar, and, as there were lights within, they could see and hear everything that transpired. Dick peeped through. Dame Eleanor, he perceived, was on her knees; and beside her, sitting as comfortably as possible in an easy chair, was Sir Ambrose Pollard of Highgate.

"I never will," said Dame Eleanor. "You may say what you list, holy father, but my resolution shall never flinch."

"Perish, then, in thy heinous guilt," said the priest, fiercely.

"Oh, father! father!" sobbed Dame Eleanor, appalled by the severity of the sentence, "is there no help for it? Must I torture my heart thus?—deceive, betray my dearest love and husband, or descend to utter darkness?"

"Where is wailing and gnashing of teeth," said the priest. "Even so, my daughter. You must even root out this heretic from your heart, and, by betraying his heresy, prove that you have utterly discarded him, or your portion will be with the Evil One."

"Yet swore I at the altar to abide by him," said Dame Eleanor,—“aye, even for better for worse, in sickness or in health——”

"I absolve thee of that vow," said Sir Ambrose, sternly; "and I tell thee, if thou dost hesitate a moment, thy name is for ever blotted out from the book of life. Even now, woman of evil, the angel Gabriel is waiting thy answer; and as it comes from thy lips, approving thy allegiance to Mother Church or to Satan, so will he prepare thy home in heaven or in hell."

"Then listen, grim priest," cried Dame Eleanor, starting to her feet, and pressing her hands over her throbbing temples, "to

a woman's answer ; and know—though hell's deepest pit be my requital—my lips falter not. God knows, if I err, I err through ignorance, and not in wilful sin ; but if my husband were never so bad, I would love him still ;—and if he were as black as Satan, and as ruthless as thou, it is not my tongue that would tell his faults.”

“ By George of England ! ” exclaimed Master Simon, bounding into the room—“ by George of England, Nell, you're a loyal lass ! For you, Sir Priest,”—here Master Simon drew his rapier—“ you quit not this house till I have cited a jury of my neighbours. Ah ! you would pass me ? By George of England—and I swear not oft—'t would better fit you to count your beads ! ”

“ I will alarm the house,” said the mediciner.

The mediciner went from room to room, calling the inmates forth, and giving them to understand that Sir Ambrose Pollard had been attempting to play the gallant with Master Racket's spouse. This libel on the Church drew together all the occupants of the house, which, as it was let out in apartments, contained several families ; and when they reached the door of Master Simon's apartment, and saw how the priest stood at bay, the feminine part of the crowd vented their indignation in loud cries of “ Shame ! ”

“ Suppose,” suggested the mediciner, “ we lay him under the pump ? ”

The proposition was carried unanimously. Sir Ambrose, accordingly, was taken bodily up, and transported to the nearest pump, which happened to stand in the yard adjoining the house. Here, while Master Simon and the mediciner held him down, he was pumped upon by Dick ; and the spectators, lending their assistance when the struggles of Sir Ambrose rendered auxiliary aid necessary, expressed their approbation of the performance by peals of laughter. They then tossed the reverend gentleman in a blanket, and finally, with three deep groans, kicked him out of the house.

CHAPTER XXII. THE BILLET-DOUX.

OF A CERTAIN MISSIVE WHICH MASTER HENRY SENT TO THE LADY EVALINE,—SHEWING HOW THE SAID MISSIVE WAS ENTRUSTED TO DICK WHITTINGTON, HOW HE DELIVERED IT TO THE WRONG LADY, AND WHAT ENSUED THEREUPON.

ABOUT a week after the events narrated in the last chapter, and at a little after the hour of sunset, Dick Whittington wended his way from the abode of Master Fitzwarren to that of his friend the mediciner. He found Miriam alone; but before he had conned his lesson in orthography, in which branch of literature he was making rapid progress, the mediciner presented himself.

"Will you do me an errand, my son?" asked the mediciner, taking a small packet from under his gown, and breaking a seal which secured the envelop.

"Certes, father," replied Dick; "I were an ingrate else."

"Here is a packet," continued the Jew, "which I have received from France. One of the letters runs thus:—"

"To Master Salmon, chirurgion, these: Herein you are advertised of my well-being in France, and entrusted with sundries—*videlicet*, one amulet and one missive, for the honourable and fair lady whose name you know. I am much concerned for my error in the matter you wot of, and cry you mercy for my perversity. I trust to win glory in these wars, being held in good repute in our array, and having Hubert Cromwell for my henchman. I pray you speak me well to the sweet lady aforesaid, and bid her remember me in her prayers, even as I remember her in mine. From your good friend, the worshipful Master Henry Sinclair, cavalier, even as it is writ by Thomas Holdforth, a worthless freer of good Sancte Frauncis, *Benedicite*."

"And what would you have me do, father?" asked Dick.

"Carry this letter and amulet to the young lady," replied the Jew. "You will find her at Leaden Hall; and mind, my son, you are to know nought of Master Henry, except that the letter comes from him."

"Even so," rejoined Dick; and taking leave of Miriam and her father, he set forth on his mission.

November in England is a dreary month, though in countries far south—south of the equator, it is the most agreeable month in the year. In England, however, it hath not a charm. The days are short and dirty, the nights are long and joyless, the atmosphere is crammed with morbid vapours, and the genius of Suicide, with her mother, Melancholy, rides the snorting wind. There is not a smile in the sky, nor a flower on the earth; and the meteors which run their unhallowed courses over the midnight heavens seem ominous of calamity and war. It was on such a night, dark and lowering and dismal, that Dick proceeded from the house of the mediciner to Leaden Hall. The pass-word procured him admission into the hall, and thence, by the order of the corpulent porter, he was led to an inner chamber.

Dick had not been many minutes an inmate of the chamber, which was the same that he had occupied on his last visit to Leaden Hall, when the door was cautiously opened, and a young woman, whom he at once recognised as Clarissa, the waiting maid of Lady Evaline, glided into the room.

“Deary me!” exclaimed Mistress Clarissa, “so we have our young page here again. In sooth, my gaffer, thy mistress sends a sorry messenger.”

“I have no mistress to speak of,” returned Dick. “I bear a missive for your lady, and it comes, not from my mistress, but from Master Henry.”

Mistress Clarissa turned deadly pale, and trembled violently. She would have fallen, so excessive was her agitation, but that her hand rested on the embrasure of a window, on which, as the faint came over her, she leaned back for support. It was some minutes, during which Dick watched her intently, before she regained her composure, but it was evident, even to the inexperienced eyes of Dick, that she did not wish her emotion to be seen.

“Bear with me, good boy,” she said, in a tender tone; “I will be better presently. I am subject to these faints, but they do not last long.”

She turned her head aside, and though, as the long curls that escaped from her hood hung down by the side of her face, and thus concealed it from observation, he could not see whether she was weeping or no, Dick fancied that he heard two or three stifled sobs, and a sigh, so deep and so sad that it seemed to have rent the heart. Mistress Clarissa, however, soon recovered herself, and, having assumed her original posture, desired Dick to deliver himself of his errand.

Now, notwithstanding his characteristic caution, Dick had on a former occasion observed such a tone of confidence in the dialogue between Lady Evaline and Mistress Clarissa, and had thereupon formed so high an estimate of the trustworthiness of the latter, that even had the Jew directed him to deliver his message to none but the party most concerned, he would not have scrupled to trust

Mistress Clarissa. Indeed, as his intellectual powers were yet in their infancy, the very emotion which Clarissa displayed, and which, in all probability, would have awakened the suspicion of an experienced observer, induced him to regard her with a confidence that, when the matter in hand exercises a visible influence over her passions, can hardly be reposed in woman. She looked so lovely, too, with the tear swimming in her large eye—for the rose at meridian, as even prudes will own, is nothing in comparison to the flower that bears the dew of morning on its cheek ;—and how, inexperienced as he was, could Dick distrust her ?

“ I brought this missive,” he said, handing her the letter, “ which, with this amulet, I was charged to deliver to Lady Evaline.”

“ And it comes from Master Henry, does it, sweetheart ?” asked the other.

“ Ay, mistress,” replied Dick ; “ and I prithee weep not, for trust me, if you fear mischance hath befallen him, you are much mistaken. He is well, and safe.”

“ How know you that ?” asked Mistress Clarissa. “ But it matters not,” she added, perceiving in Dick’s countenance a fixed determination not to reply. “ It is sufficient that you do know it. But wherefore did you think that I had any fears for him ? Wherefore should I fear for him, except as for one who is known to my honoured lady, and who—has shewn me kindness ?”

“ Even so,” replied Dick.

“ Ay, even so,” responded Mistress Clarissa. “ Thou art a good boy, I warrant thee. And where may Master Henry be ?” she continued, throwing into her face as much indifference as she could assume.

“ In France, mistress.”

“ Ah ! say you ?” resumed Mistress Clarissa. “ Gone to the wars, eh ? He will get him renown, I promise you.”

“ I think ay,” replied Dick. “ But I have discharged my message, mistress ; and so I will bid you good den.”

“ Good den, sweetheart !” said Mistress Clarissa. “ I will bear thy errand faithfully to my mistress. This way, sweetheart :” and Mistress Clarissa preceded Dick to the hall, and escorted him to the outer porch.

Leaving Dick to wend his way to his master’s residence, whither he forthwith repaired, the chronicler must introduce the reader to the chamber of Mistress Clarissa, who, directly she had seen Dick clear of Leaden Hall, retired to collect her thoughts.

Women can never think so well as when they are in a decumbent posture ; and this curious fact, whether from instinct or education, they are all aware of. It need not, therefore, be said, that on entering her chamber for the purpose of holding a private conference with herself, Mistress Clarissa first secured herself from intrusion by locking the door, and then threw herself on her couch.

Her head rested on the white pillow, which by the side of her jetty hair looked as lucid as snow, and the tears flowed from her eyes so slowly and so heavily, and her bosom heaved so high and so quick, that it was easy to see how the spirit within was writhing in the icy clutch of ironhearted despair.

It is a fearful thing—that blight which comes over a young heart's affections. Tears indeed may irrigate, and the sun of memory may shine, and friendship, as it looks over the garden of the heart, may plant a fresh flower there; but if love, the tree of life, be withered, no irrigation, no sunshine, no culture, can impart vitality to the soil. It may, however, be some time before this barrenness is visible; for the fever of excitement, like the temperature of the hothouse, often produces floral hope, though, like forced fruit, it has not the substance or duration of that which is the regular and spontaneous production of sterling nature. Thus it was, that when she had relieved her overcharged spirit by an effusion of tears, Mistress Clarissa recollected many particulars relative to Master Henry, which it is not necessary to mention here, but which she, poor thing, garnered up in her heart of hearts, and, as a consequence, she became so excited by the review, that, in the agitation of the moment, she did not feel the effects of that withering blight which had shed its dark shadow and humid breath over her youthful heart.

She had been brought up in a convent, in which she had held some menial post, so that she was not unacquainted with letters; and having resolved to search out Master Henry, and to follow him whithersoever he went, she tore open the packet which Dick had given her for her mistress, and perused its contents.

By this means she was informed of the local position of Master Henry, who, she found, was attached to the garrison of Calais. Having read the letter over at least twenty times, folding it up after each perusal and placing it in her bosom, and then, as though she had forgotten some part of it, taking it out again and reperusing it, she pressed it fondly to her pale and trembling lips. But, instead of kissing it, she drew it impatiently away; for the thought occurred to her that the fond expressions it contained were addressed to another—to her mistress; and without pausing a single moment, without listening to one whisper of struggling conscience, or even indulging the slightest degree of hesitation, she tore it in a hundred shreds, and scattered them over the floor.

Mistress Clarissa then rose, and having adjusted her dress, and assumed as composed a manner as she could possibly attain, descended to the chamber of Lady Evaline. She found that lady sitting at her toilet, with her arms resting on the table, and her head buried in her hands.

“Why weep you so, fair lady?” asked Clarissa, who really sympathized, as much as a rival could, with her more favoured,

though dejected, mistress. "Shall a towering falcon like you be affected by this sparrow-hawk?"

"Peace, woman!" said her mistress, angrily. "How darest thy tongue impugn his nobility? Sparrow-hawk, forsooth! I trow there be few, though royally born, but would stoop to less noble prey than Henry Sinclair."

"Well-a-day, Lady Evaline!" returned Clarissa, mournfully. "What am I to say to pleasure you? But yesternight you were calling him a traitorous lover—a deceiving bachelor—a false——"

"Ay, go on," interrupted Lady Evaline. "Tell me all the false names I applied to him. What matter though it be torture? 'Tis my just meed. Haply, even when I was gainsaying his love, he was telling his noble heart that it was mine, and none other's. Oh! oh! could I but know where he is? Belike, in the grave."

"Suppose it were so, fair lady?" said Clarissa. "Nay, now, I only said, suppose——"

"Thou dost well, Clarissa," cried Lady Evaline. "Thou canst not be better employed than in torturing thy mistress. Nay, my dame, I can loosen that secure-pin myself. Thy tongue and hands will ever be meddling where they have no business. There—thou mayst retire now."

Somewhat offended at the angry tone which her mistress had adopted, yet entertaining too high a respect for her to reply in a similar strain, Mistress Clarissa executed her usual obeisance, and, muttering a good den, retired to her own apartment. She threw herself on the couch, without divesting herself of any of her clothes, and in a few minutes was sound asleep.

The next morning Clarissa arose at an early hour. She snatched up a small bundle, containing some articles of apparel, which she had put up on the preceding night, and placing it under her arm, and throwing her cloak round her, descended to the hall. Few of the inmates were yet stirring; and except from the fat porter, who facetiously observed that early rising was beneficial to the complexion of young ladies, she met with no interruption.

Having emerged from the hall, which she quitted without a sigh, Mistress Clarissa proceeded at a rapid pace towards Cheap-side, and, on reaching that locality, entered a small and obscure shop, which, notwithstanding the earliness of the hour, was already open for the transaction of business. A short and squalid-looking man, who was arranging his commodities in the most advantageous manner on a low counter, instantly forsook his employment, and desired to know her pleasure.

"I want," said Clarissa, with a smile, "a dress for a mumming. Let me have a page's dress; and, if you will allow me to retire to a back room where I can array myself anew, I will requite you well."

"Thou shalt be accommodated as thus," replied the trader.

"What say you to this jerkin of scarlet, embroidered with gold? 'Tis a gay one. I had it made for a page of Master Philpot, the great merchant."

"It will do well," said Clarissa.

"Here is its fellow," continued the trader. "The two suits are complete. They were ordered nigh a month back; but the varlet—for want of money, I suppose—has never called for them."

"I will even take them, then," rejoined Clarissa. "Will you shew me where I can array me?"

"Ay, mistress," said the trader. And he called a woman, who was sorting thread at the other end of the shop, and bade her retire with Clarissa.

The woman led the way, and Clarissa followed, to a back room, which overlooked the shop. Here she attired herself in her new costume, and slipping a silver tester, or sixpence, into the hand of her attendant, descended to the shop.

"They fit me well," she said, as she drew her page's cloak around her, and glanced with a look of pride at her finely-carved legs. "What are the charges?"

"With this sword," replied the trader, "which will complete your equipment, I will take no less than ten pieces."

"Here they are," said Clarissa—and she counted out the ten pieces; and while the trader was testing their orthodoxy by jingling them on the counter, she tied up her clothes in the bundle aforementioned, and strode unquestioned from the shop.

The denizens of Cheap were by this time generally astir; and Clarissa, therefore, had no difficulty in finding a hairdresser's shop, which, though she was aware that barbers are very inquisitive people, she determined to enter. Had the proprietor been a young man, and gifted with the curiosity which is the usual characteristic of his profession, she would probably have encountered some risk; but, fortunately for her enterprise, he was an old man, whose eyesight was none of the best. He did not, therefore, detect anything in her appearance which could induce a suspicion of her sex; and the articles for which she asked—a dye for her face and a moustache for her lip—were too commonly required by dashing young pages to elicit the slightest question. She had arranged her hair overnight, having cropped a great portion of it, and what remained was parted in the manner which then prevailed among men; so that, notwithstanding that when she applied the dye to her face she removed her bonnet, the dim eyes of the barber, even though they had been fixed upon her head, could not have observed the smallest vestige of feminine fashion. Having had the moustachios properly set, and imbursed the barber for his services and goods, Clarissa again sallied into the street, assuming, as she bent her steps towards old Queen's Hith, the air and swagger of a page of consequence and good breeding.

In the year 1377, when the present Jerusalem Coffee House was not yet thought of, the captains of merchantmen of all sorts and sizes, whether engaged in coast trading or in traffic with places beyond the sea, were wont to frequent a respectable hotel, designated by the euphonious appellation of the Pot and Kettle, which was situate in the vicinity of Queen's Hith. Clarissa had heard of this place, and, as she passed down Bow Lane, she saw the spigot and bush over the hostel door; and these appurtenances, which intimated that accommodation might be had within, reminded her that she had not yet broken her fast. Reflecting that this place was one where she was most likely to gain some information that she required, and that, however great her hurry, she must tarry to breakfast somewhere, she introduced herself to the public room forthwith, and ordered refreshments.

While she was engaged at her meal, of which indeed she ate but little, a person clad like the skipper of a merchant vessel, accompanied by a tall gaunt man dressed in the livery of a falconer, pushed into the room, and, without taking any notice of her, seated themselves at an adjoining table. As Clarissa had little inclination to eat, and still less to indulge in meditation, she was not inattentive to the discourse of the two strangers, who, by way of breakfast, were amusing themselves with two respectable-size bottles of sack and a small quantity of toast.

"And what time do you purpose starting, Sir Skipper?" asked the falconer. "Let it be early, for I am impatient of my sojourn here, and would prefer a French sword to an English gallows."

"I am off at noon," replied the skipper. "But art so near the gallows that thou fear'st not a French sword?"

"Near the gallows, forsooth!" returned the falconer. "Did not I tell you I was falconer to the great Dame Alice Perrers—the fairest lady in this or any other realm? And have not they caged her up in the Tower yonder, for no other reason, forsooth, than that she nursed the old king as the damsels of old nursed King David?"

"Nay," cried the skipper, "I will contest that matter with you. The damsels of old, you know——"

Here Clarissa, who was apprehensive, from the skipper's preface, that he was about to discuss a subject which, however entertaining to philosophers, was not exactly adapted for a female's ear, interrupted the discussion by a question which she put to the skipper himself.

"Know you of any vessel bound for Calais, sir?" she asked.

"Ay, Sir Page," replied the skipper; "there is the *Rose of England*, commanded by me, John Waters, sails at noon. Art for the wars?"

"I am for Calais, worthy sir," returned Clarissa.

"'Twere a pity," rejoined the skipper, in a chafing tone, "that

so fair a youth, made, one would think, purposely for ladies' bowers, should go and rough it in the wars. Prithee, be advised, Sir Page, and tarry at Jericho awhile."

"A fico for your Jericho!" cried the gaunt falconer. "See you not yon youth sports a moustache and a toledo? I warrant you, sir mariner, he would prefer him the din of war to the din of a woman's tongue. I have known many with a soft voice, as this fair page hath, who have acquitted themselves gallantly of their devoir."

"I thank you for your good word, brave sir," said Clarissa. "I make no boast, but I hope I have an English heart."

"Ay, ay," rejoined the good-natured falconer, "to be sure thou hast. Why, now, when I was your age, though I never wore so gay a doublet, I was reckoned as spruce and soft as a gallant might well be. Not to disparage you, who are bonny enough, I was as bonny a lad as ever trilled your demiquavers. Folks who were very wise and very old, said I would never abide a naked sword; and my mother, poor simple body! thought me the innocentest creature alive; but, by-and-by, what think you happed?"

"What?" asked the skipper and Clarissa together.

"Why," resumed the falconer, "they thought me so innocent, poor things, they let me go as I liked among the queans, and——"

"We may guess the sequel," said Clarissa, endeavouring to repress a blush.

"Hush, hush!" exclaimed the skipper. "What happed?"

"Nay, nay!" resumed the falconer, "if you are for your modesties, Sir Page—your circumstance of visage, and such like matters—I can be prim, I warrant you"—and the falconer assumed a prim and supercilious air. "Why, Sir Page, I would not touch thy notions of decorum, I promise you. If you say I would, Sir Page, and you have mettle sufficient, I will give you satisfactions. Nay, I will not wound thee. Stand up now, and I will give satisfactions."

"Ah! to it!" exclaimed the skipper, with a savage grin.

"Nay," said the falconer, whose temper was of that peculiar nature which, though roused by the slightest friction, is so subservient to the better feelings as to be calmed the moment its resentment is expressed, "I am no match for this fair youth. I was a fool to irritate thee," he continued, extending his brawny hand; "but there is Miles Wintley's hand, and so, if bad words have passed, let no more be said."

"I ask grace, brave sir, and thank you," said Clarissa, putting her hand in that of the falconer. "Truly, if this worthy skipper will afford me a passage to France, I will be glad to have you for a shipmate."

"Thou shalt have a passage," said the skipper, "for two pieces."

Clarissa paid the money straightway, and after the bargain had been sealed with some more sack, which recalled many fanciful but not innocent reminiscences of his youthful days to the tongue of the gaunt falconer, the trio quitted the hostel for the ship. This they soon reached, and two hours afterwards, to Clarissa's great contentment, the *Rose of England* was impelled by a favourable breeze down the silver Thames.

CHAPTER XXIII. THE ADVENTURER.

IN WHICH MRS. CLARISSA EMBARKS FOR CALAIS, BUT, OWING TO CIRCUMSTANCES, WHICH ARE FULLY SET FORTH, IT BECOMES A MATTER OF DOUBT WHETHER SHE WILL LIVE TO THE END OF THE CHAPTER.

As the day following that on which Clarissa embarked for France drew towards a close, and the sun, seemingly wearied with his day's march, dropped slowly into the great deep, as though he were about to refresh himself, after the consummation of his toilsome duty, with that greatest of luxuries, a bath, the heavy bark that rejoiced in the name of the *Rose of England* was running under reefed topsails round the North Foreland. The haze which is so peculiar to the English channel, and which renders its navigation more difficult and dangerous than the shoals and rocks with which it abounds, became more dense as the sun disappeared, and—which is another peculiarity in the atmosphere of that locality—the easterly wind also increased. There were, besides the man at the helm, three men on the deck, and these and the skipper, who was standing aft with Clarissa and the falconer, constituted the crew. They had hitherto, from fear of the French privateers, hugged the coast of England, but as night approached, and the fog and wind increased, the skipper judged it prudent to stretch out to mid-channel.

While, however, the crew were preparing to wear ship, a sudden alteration in the colour of the water, which at once assumed a deep yellow shade, alarmed the watchful skipper, who saw that the galliot was floating over a sand-bank of considerable extent.

"Put your helm port-hard," he shouted to the helmsman.

"Port-hard it is," cried the other; and the next moment the head of the galliot was turned in the opposite direction.

Hardly, however, had she been thus turned, when a heavy sea struck the stern, and so sudden and violent was the shock, that for some moments after, the skipper and crew thought that she had struck the bank. Every one, except the helmsman, was thrown off his feet, and Clarissa was precipitated on to the breast

of the skipper. Till this moment she had not been visited by any of those qualms which are the prelude to sea-sickness, and which, however great the fortitude of the sufferer, so prostrate the mind as to render it incapable of the least exertion or reflection. Now, however, she felt that swimming in the head, that giddiness of the eyes, that pressure on the breast, those hundred indescribable sensations, which make up the sickness of the sea. She was thrown, as has been observed, on to the breast of the skipper, who, being unprepared for such a contingency, and already rendered unstable by the abrupt movement of the galliot, fell beneath her weight.

"This comes," said the brute, "of leaving your dam's apron-string. Beshrew your lazy limbs, sir, can't you stand aground?"

But Clarissa was unable to speak. Just as he was about to throw her from him, and for that purpose drew himself back, a button of her doublet caught in his jerkin, which, as he moved back, tore open her vest, and the astonished eyes of the skipper were informed of her sex.

"Now, Sir Skipper, speak not harshly," said the falconer, moving towards them. "Let me carry him below."

"No, I thank you," replied the skipper, taking up Clarissa in his arms. "I will take him down myself, I thank you. Our Lady knows, Sir Falconer, I meant not to speak harsh to the lad; but my temper is rough, and easily chafed."

The skipper, as he thus delivered himself, descended the companion, and entered the cabin below. Here, fitted to the sides, were two berths, in one of which he extended Clarissa. As her eyes were closed—for she had closed them in the hope that such a measure would mitigate their giddiness—and her cheeks were devoid of blood, he thought that she was insensible, and being in nature a thorough brute, and accustomed to give a free rein to his evil passions, he pressed his unhallowed lips on her fair, round cheek. At this moment the galliot gave a lurch, and, cursing the chance which commanded his presence on deck, the skipper retreated from the cabin.

Though roused somewhat from her apathy by the conduct of the skipper, who, she perceived, had penetrated her disguise, Clarissa was yet unable to summon her scattered senses to her rescue. Had she, indeed, been in the full enjoyment of health, and thoroughly possessed of her intellectual powers, the difficulties of her situation would have surpassed her capacity; but now, when she was incapable of action, either of body or of mind, the prospect before her was intolerably dreadful. She was in the power of a man who, as she gleaned from his aspect and manner, was destitute of all moral feeling or control, and none, save the gaunt falconer, to whom she could look for assistance. Of the falconer, too, she had her doubts; for if there were any verity in his own evidence, which he had given voluntarily, he was a dangerous person when ladies were concerned. But the crew—those men who

were as rough and ruthless as the tempests by which they were so frequently tossed—she shuddered to think of them. And then she felt that lassitude, that callous indifference, that lax languor of the mind and horrible relaxation of feeling, which, in nine cases out of ten, form the pathology of sea-sickness—she felt these creeping like chill death over her swooning frame. As is not unusual under such circumstances, or even under more trying ones, she insensibly fell into a gentle doze, which gradually ripened into sleep.

In the meantime the hands and hearts of the party on deck were employed by other matters. The skipper, when the lurch which had drawn him from Clarissa called him to the deck, was solicited by the falconer to run into some English port; but he persisted, as he knew of no roadstead nearer than Dover, in running for Calais. As they were in mid-channel, he said there was no immediate danger, but he would, nevertheless, remain on deck, and just to pass the time away, and for no other purpose, he would pledge the falconer in a cup of canary.

Having set a good look-out forward, and hoisted a lantern aloft to warn any ships that might approach of their whereabouts, the skipper and the falconer sat down on the deck, and commenced their potations. The artful skipper, however, did not drain his cup with the same ardour as the falconer, who, though somewhat surprised at the hospitality of his host, did not suspect him of any evil motive, but tiptoed off his canary with an industry which was truly indefatigable. Indeed, having an invincible passion for that liquor, he held canary to be the best medium by which friends could correspond with each other, and therefore, if he had lived in the present day, would never have patronized that new-fangled and cold-hearted morality which fills the welcome-cup with water, and toasts friends in tea. At length, after repeated efforts to convince himself that the skipper had not two heads, and that it was the ship, and not himself, that was indulging in locomotion, he sank back on the deck, murmuring his disapprobation of something or other which he styled the “what you call it.” This was the very end which the skipper had laboured to effect. He therefore left the falconer, as soon as he was asleep, to dream of the joys of women and wine, on which entertaining themes, during the progress of their carousal, he had been both facetious and eloquent; and having given directions to his men to keep a good look-out, and to keep the ship’s head S. S. E., the skipper descended the companion ladder.

Clarissa, as has been stated, had fallen asleep, and though some wiseacres recommend a beef-steak, which acts as an emetic, and some a glass of brandy, which increases the head-ache, sleep is the only and certain antidote to sea-sickness. She was awakened, however, by a rather rough caress, which, though possibly meant to be taken in good part, was a familiarity which she had no in-

clination to brook. Nevertheless, knowing that undisguised resistance would be of no avail, she determined to oppose the skipper by policy rather than by action. She accordingly drew back from his hold, and then sat as erect as she could, holding on, as seamen say, by the stanchions of her berth.

"What seek you?" she asked, in a faltering tone.

"Nay, now," replied the skipper, in a low voice, "pretend not ignorance. I know your secret; and it will be your fault, mistress, if it be revealed to my crew."

"Wherefore do you call me mistress?"

"Why, for that matter," returned the skipper, "I will call you dame, if you list, or, if you like it better, gammer. But, sooth to speak, I should hardly reckon you a matron yet."

"Are you a man?" asked Clarissa. "If you pretend to the name of one," she added, struggling to free herself from his hold, "you will quit me now."

"That would be a droll way of approving my manhood," replied the skipper. "So no more of your preaching, an' it please you, mistress."

"Desist, villain!" cried Clarissa, losing the control which she had hitherto maintained over her temper. "Desist, or I will alarm the falconer and crew."

"For the falconer," said the skipper, "he is roaring drunk, my leman; and the crew will hear enough of your alarms by-and-by."

"Hold!" exclaimed Clarissa, thrusting him back with a degree of strength which surprised herself—"Hold, ruffian! Hear me now! If you retire forthwith, and keep my secret from your crew, I will make it worth your while."

"How?" demanded the skipper.

"See here!" continued Clarissa, drawing a purse from within her doublet—"gold! An orphan's portion—all she has in the world but her honour."

"Well, well," said the other, "if you prefer the honour to the gold—the gilt, as one may say, to the gingerbread—I will not wrong the orphan, but even be content with your money."

"Ay," returned Clarissa, "but you must swear me first, Sir Skipper—swear that you will keep your conditions, even as I swear to complain not of your usage."

"I swear——"

"By the three kings of Cologne," prompted Clarissa.

"I swear me by the three kings of Cologne," said the skipper, crossing himself, "to offer you no further molestation."

"Enough!" cried Clarissa, handing him the purse.

The skipper laughed, and, retiring from the cabin, ascended to the deck.

Once more left to herself, with the assurance that the falconer, if need were, was incapable of affording her assistance, Clarissa

again extended herself in her berth, though, as she still entertained doubts of the skipper's good faith, she had no intention of giving way to sleep. Being, however, exhausted both in body and mind, and oppressed with a drowsiness for which she could not account, she gradually sank into a doze. She had been dozing, as she afterwards thought, about two hours, when she became sensible of a great uproar overhead. The galliot, too, was pitching so heavily, and the wind and the masts and the mariners, each seeming to strive for the ascendant, howled and creaked and clamoured so vehemently, that though the break of the raging sea was dreadful to hear, particularly when a few inches of plank formed the only bulwark which could be reared against it—notwithstanding this, which was sufficient to appal the timid heart of a woman, Clarissa thought that it was nothing in comparison to that heavy tossing of the ship, and that hoarse conflict between humanity and the elements, which added so many terrors to a terrific death. Nevertheless, being determined to know the worst, she rose from her creaking berth, and, having briefly commended herself to the protection of Providence, ascended to the deck.

How dark it was, except where the summit of a high wave, immediately before and behind the galliot, displayed a streak of boiling white! The sails were all furled: not a rag fluttered in the wind, and yet the stout masts, as the galliot rolled heavily to the wave, seemed ready to go by the board. There were two men, who held on by belaying-pins, stationed on either bow, for the purpose of keeping a good look-out; and at the helm there were two others, striving, but in vain, to keep the galliot to her course. Not one of those men, in that awful turmoil, betrayed the least sign of fear—not one of them moved a muscle, or spoke an unnecessary word. The falconer, whom the scene had sobered, was brave, but that very quality in those around him, who were used to combat with the elements, and who, on the present occasion, seemed impervious to emotion—the very bravery of those men, strange and even paradoxical as it may appear, made his heart quake. He turned away from the skipper, at whose side he had been standing, and thus confronted Clarissa, who was ascending the companion.

“Give us your hand, Sir Page,” he said, extending his left hand, and grasping hold of the bulwark with his right. “There,” he continued, as he assisted Clarissa to his side, “you’ll be better on deck; and for your comfort, my master, I would advertise you that we are in no manner of danger. It was predicted of me, by one Doctor Catchpenny, a cunning soothsayer, that no power on earth could prevent my dying on the gallows; and though many would be much disconcerted at this prospect, yet, as it assures me against the evil of drowning, I cannot but regard it as pleasant and comfortable.”

Clarissa made no reply; and they stood thus, without inter-

changing a word, for nearly half-an-hour, when, as a heavy sea dashed over her stern, the galliot gave a sudden pitch:—she had struck on a sand bank.

“It’s all over now,” said the skipper, with an air of savage indifference.

“*Ora pro nobis*,” began the falconer, who, till this moment, had been solacing himself with ideal representations of gibbets, and murmuring blessings on the head of Doctor Catchpenny, the learned soothsayer—“*Ora pro nobis*.”

“Plenty o’ time for prayers, my master,” said the skipper. “Hoy, boys!” he continued, addressing the crew—“let us give death a wet welcome. Liquor, boys—bring up some liquor.”

“How long think you to hold together?” asked the falconer, somewhat revived by the skipper’s request for good cheer.

“Half-an-hour,” replied the skipper, “and in that time we have much to employ us. Suppose, as women ought to be served first, we begin with you, gammer.”

“What mean you to do with the boy?” asked the astonished falconer, as the skipper seized Clarissa’s arm.

“Boy! said you?” returned the skipper. “I see, after all, you know not a petticoat like I do. ’Tis a girl.”

The falconer gave utterance to a sententious whistle.

“For the sake of God!” exclaimed Clarissa, catching hold of his arm—“that God who will soon judge you, protect me, sir!”

The falconer clutched her hand. The next moment, before Clarissa could interpose, the skipper lay bleeding on the deck.

“Go down and pray,” said the falconer, handing her to the companion.

There was a clashing of swords, a clamour of voices, a groan, a fall; and Clarissa, who had hastened to fulfil the falconer’s advice, sprang from her knees. Her foot kicked against something, and by one of those involuntary impulses which cannot be accounted for, and which, for that reason alone, may be considered the inspiration of the guardian intelligences, she stooped to see what it was. It was a weapon—a caliver, or ancient musket—a weapon that had recently been invented. She sprang to the companion, darted like light up the ladder, and, without knowing whether it was loaded or no, levelled her piece. The falconer, whose back was towards her, was fighting two men; and two others, who had only tarried to drain a large flagon of wine, were rushing forwards. Clarissa’s nerves were strung as firm as wire: she raised her caliver, inclined her head gently forward, and fired.

“Killed him, by George!” said the falconer, as he struck his antagonist down, and turned round to Clarissa.

Clarissa had just placed her feet on the deck, and the falconer, propping himself up with his sword-hand, was stretching out his other hand to support her, when a high wave, which dashed furiously over the stern, separated them. Clarissa felt herself impelled

forward, but by a desperate effort, for which, as she reached the galliot's head, she summoned all her strength, she contrived to throw her arms round the bowsprit. Scarcely had she gained this position, whence she expected to be swept by the next wave, when the vessel rolled over on her beam-ends, and the next moment, as a sea rushed with resistless force over the stern, the masts flew, the timbers started, the bulwarks were swept away, and the *Rose of England* was a wreck.

Clarissa, with admirable presence of mind, still clung to the bowsprit, which the force of the wave had torn away from the galliot, and though she felt herself drawn down in the vortex which the submersion of the main wreck occasioned, and was almost suffocated by attempting to respire in the water, she strengthened rather than relaxed her hold. As she was again rising to the surface, after being under water several moments, she felt something grasp her foot, and was straightway drawn down again. She kicked out both her feet with all her force, and struck them against the body that prevented her ascension, and, having thus thrown off the incumbrance, rose like a cork to the surface.

How pitchy dark was everything around, except, here and there, that ghastly foam which the sea spat up! Rain, too, was descending in torrents, and spattering and clattering on the boiling sea, whose roar, so dreadfully grand, held hoarse communion with the howling wind. Clarissa's heart beat so wildly that she thought that there was but one nerve from her brain to her foot, for she felt the pulsation vibrate through her entire frame. And yet, under all this affliction—though her veins were swollen almost to bursting; though her young heart seemed to oscillate in her breast; though her nostrils were distended by her hard respiration; though, as she endeavoured to peer through the dense darkness before her, her eyes almost started from their sockets; yet, despite of all these evils—even when she was most desirous to banish worldly thoughts, and, for one brief moment, to supplicate that great One who hath truly and kindly declared himself to be merciful—even then, in the very jaws of gaping destruction, a tender recollection of Master Henry would fascinate her hot brain. Poor thing! that tempestuous sea which, though devoid of pity, still bore up the bark of her hope, was not so dark, or so ruthless, or so stormy, as her inexorable destiny.

Her energies, after she had been buffeting with the waves for nearly an hour, were becoming exhausted, and she was beginning to think that drowning might not be so hard a death as people reported, and that, at any rate, it might be preferable to such a joyless life as hers was like to be, when, giving way to the obsession, she suffered her feet to sink to their utmost, and her hold of the buoyant spar to relax. To her surprise, however, her feet touched a bottom; and, though the darkness was so compact that she could not see through it, she was encouraged to infer, from

the shallowness of the water, that she was in the immediate vicinity of land. Cheered up by this fortuitous discovery, which was the more welcome as it was unexpected, she pushed her faithful float steadily through the water, and, to her great joy, found this latter become more shallow at every step. She now heard the dash of the surge on the beach, but still, though she knew that it was close at hand, she could not discern the shore. Suddenly, as she paused a moment to recover her breath, a wave caught her unprepared, and swept her impetuously onward. Her heart seemed to spring from its seat:—she drew one breath on the summit of the headlong wave, and the next, which carried up her thanks to the throne of God, she drew on the beach.

She did not lay still one solitary second. She scrambled to her feet, and, staggering forwards a few yards, fell down as the surge of the next wave washed her feet. She soon recovered breath and energy sufficient to scramble further from the water, and then, stretching herself beneath a group of stunted trees, gave way to the influence of sleep.

It was very cold, and her haven afforded her but little shelter from the elements, but Clarissa was so weak and exhausted that, even had it been possible to find any more hospitable nook in the vicinity, she would not have given herself the trouble to seek it. Moreover, notwithstanding the natural susceptibility of her constitution, she had undergone so much excitement and fatigue, and her eyes were so weary with straining and watching, that she was in a manner impervious to the cold, and, now that she had escaped a watery grave, indifferent to danger. She laid down, therefore, under cover of the trees, and hoping, yet scarcely believing, that she might ever wake on earth, she fell asleep.

She had been sleeping about two hours, and dreaming that she was again an inmate of the old convent in which she had been reared, and that, though otherwise clad in the travesty of a page, she wore over her head a long black veil, which, with a ring on the second finger of her hand, marked her as the bride of Heaven, and she had been dreaming that this atrocious blasphemy, which the voice of Heaven itself has branded as a lie, was chorused by a choir of priests, when she was awakened by the sound of voices. She listened attentively; but though the speakers conversed in French, with which language she was not unacquainted, she neither spake nor moved. Indeed, if she had been never so much disposed, she was utterly unable to move; for her limbs were as rigid as cold could make them, and, though she was not at the moment aware of it, her voice was so hoarse that it was not possible for a foreigner to comprehend her.

“I will swear you he is English, dame,” said one of the strangers, who had the appearance of a fisherman, while the other, who was a buxom woman of some five-and-twenty years, appeared to be his

spouse. "I can tell them, dame, by the bravery of their array. Mark you not this youth's finery? Why, he hath as much gold on his jerkin as would serve the Constable of France."

"Are the English so rich?" asked the dame. "Wherefore, then, did they spoil our poor cottage? We have little to spare, I trow."

"Wherefore," asked the fisherman, "do I let this fellow lay here? I trow it were an easy matter to throw him in the sea."

Here Clarissa attempted to rise, but finding herself unable, she endeavoured to awaken the fisherman's better feelings by supplication. But as she was very hoarse, and as no language, perhaps, requires such nicety of pronunciation as the French, the fisherman was unable to elicit her meaning.

"Poor fellow!" ejaculated the dame. "He is a fair-faced youth, I trow. 'Twere a pity he should be drowned, or, what is worse, left here to die. Suppose we give him shelter awhile; and in a day or two, when he recovers, you can give him up as a prisoner."

"So be it, then," rejoined her husband, who, notwithstanding that he had threatened to throw Clarissa into the sea, had not so obdurate a heart as he gave himself credit for.

He stooped down and lifted her up in his arms, and, preceded by his wife, bent his steps towards a small hut, which was situate at a little distance from the beach. As they ascended from the beach, and Clarissa for the first time surveyed the surrounding country, she perceived a fortified town at about three miles distance, and this, as the marshy country around answered the description of the *Pas de Calais*, she correctly divined to be Calais.

On reaching the hut, which contained only two rooms, she expressed a wish to lay down, and was accordingly extended on a snug though humble couch by the fisherman. Being left to herself, and having first, by a careful survey, assured herself that she was not watched, she threw off her travesty, and slipped into bed. It was fortunate, perhaps, that she lost no time in effecting this arrangement, for she had scarcely drawn the bed-clothes over her, when her hostess entered the room, bearing in her hand a cup of mulled wine, which she advised her to drink. Merely to rid herself of the attendance of the good-natured Frenchwoman, and not with any expectation that it would produce beneficial results, Clarissa drank the proffered draught, and, on the egression of her hostess, composed herself for sleep.

She slept long, for when she awoke it was quite dark. She did not, however, feel much refreshed, for she was covered with a profuse perspiration, and she felt that her ultimate recovery—perhaps her life, depended on its continuance. She therefore drew the clothes more closely round her, and endeavoured, but in vain, to resume her slumbers. First she thought of Master Henry, and then of the dangers which still surrounded herself, and as this



2nd Chapter.

Clarissa discovered by the French Fisherman

latter subject forced itself on her consideration, and she recollected the fisherman's intention to give her up to the French authorities, her heart sank within her.

She moved her lips in prayer, and extending her hands to supplicate Heaven (as is still the custom in countries where the Romish creed prevails), her right hand upset something by the bed-side. She groped in search of the article which she had thus overturned, and found that it was an earthen jug, containing a cool liquor, which, with some bread and fish, stood on a chair at her side. Without being hungry, or having the slightest desire to eat, Clarissa felt faint and restless, and beginning with a small piece, which served to distend her stomach, she gradually disposed of the greater part of the bread and fish. She then sank back on her pillow, and as she lay ruminating on her prospects, and her perspiration by degrees decreased, it suddenly occurred to her that she might yet be able to defeat the purposes of her host.

No sooner did the thought strike her than she hastened to the experiment. She rose cautiously from her bed, from which she took a blanket to wrap round her body, and proceeded to her chamber-door. She raised the latch without making any noise; but her very caution in opening the door, which creaked the louder from being opened slowly, nearly ruined her project.

"*Qu'est ce que c'est ?*" cried a rough voice, which she knew to be that of the fisherman.

Clarissa did not reply, but closing the door quickly, in the expectation that she was discovered, found, to her great surprise, that the celerity of its motion had prevented the door from creaking.

"*Ce n'est que les rats,*" muttered the fisherman.

Clarissa, for a quarter of an hour, stood on the tip-toe of anxiety, and that quarter of an hour, which she computed by the number of her respirations, was as tedious as a live-long day. At its expiration, however, she determined to make another effort, and accordingly drew open the door.

The faint embers of a fire gleamed on the hearth, round which, she perceived, her apparel was hung to dry, and a gentle light, if that which serves only to shew darkness can be called light, was diffused through the room. The fisherman and his spouse, sympathizing with each other even in sleep, were snoring in concert, and never did more dulcet harmony reach the ears of Clarissa. She hastily donned her clothes, which, by the good management of her hostess, were thoroughly dry, and taking her buskins in her hand, and wrapping her blanket round her body, she stole softly to the door.

She was full ten minutes, so cautiously did she proceed, before she drew back the crazy bolt which secured the door at the top. She then lifted the latch, and endeavoured to pull the door in,

but being bolted at the bottom, which she had not noticed, it resisted her efforts.

"*Diable !*" cried the fisherman, whom the noise had awakened, and who at once surmised what had occasioned it, "*le garçon Anglais s'en va !*"

Clarissa drew back the bolt, pulled in the door, and darted out. The Frenchman was close at her heels, but not being prepared for the chace, and being, besides, a few yards in the rear, she had the advantage.

"*L'arretez !*" cried the enraged Frenchman, who, seeing no chance of overtaking her, had caught up a caliver, and levelled it at her—" *L'arretez, avant que je tire !*"

Clarissa, however, was determined not to surrender, and though there were but a few yards between her and her pursuer, and instant death seemed inevitable, she continued running. She saw a flash of light, heard a report, and a ball, which left a tingling noise in her ear, whizzed past the side of her head. She gave vent to an hysterical burst of laughter, and, springing over the marshy soil, was soon beyond hearing of the Frenchman's execrations.

One's heart must be depressed indeed, and one's body very weak, when incapable of making a last effort for liberty, and consequently, though her limbs were as stiff as they could well be, and her joints and muscles proportionably sore, Clarissa staggered on towards Calais at a pace that surprised herself. Her brain was very giddy, and so was her heart, and faint withal; and she could have laid down on that cold ground, which was so miry and damp, and sobbed herself to sleep. Nevertheless, howsoever low the mental and corporal energies, there is sometimes infused into the mind a moral electricity, which, particularly in moments of extreme misery, imparts to the spirits at intervals a momentary strength, and, buoyed up by this influence, Clarissa journeyed on, proposing, when she had progressed a few yards further, to lay down. When, however, she had traversed the few yards, she thought that she might as well proceed a short distance further, and thus, still making good her way, she continued thinking that she would halt a while, or that, as her strength endured, she would go on for a moment or two more, till, worn out with fatigue, she reached the lines of Calais.

"Who goes there?" cried the watchful sentinel.

Clarissa did not answer, but as the sentinel grasped her arm, she tottered back on his breast, and fainted.

The sentinel, moved as much by surprise as compassion, did not disturb her, and in a few moments she recovered. She told him, in answer to his inquiries, that she had been shipwrecked and taken prisoner, and that, after contriving to elude the vigilance of her gaoler, she had journeyed thither in the hope of obtaining service.

"Poor lad!" exclaimed the soldier. "Thou hast had to encounter dangers, I warrant.—But cheer up! I will have thee before the captain of the guard, and when thou hast answered soothly to his questions, thou'lt have provision assigned thee."

Leaning on the sentinel's arm, and walking forward as quickly as she could, Clarissa was introduced to the ward room, whence, at the instigation of the sentinel, she was led by a sergeant to the apartment of the captain.

Scarcely had she looked on that officer, in whom she recognised the one being that she loved, when an involuntary scream burst from her; but instantly recovering herself, and recollecting the necessity of maintaining her disguise, she endeavoured to stifle the suspicion which this display was calculated to induce.

"For pity's sake, brave sir," she cried, "have me not harmed! I am true English, I promise you, and no spy. I was shipwrecked, sir, and made prisoner, and by the help of Providence have escaped. Have me not harmed, sire—oh! have me not harmed!"

"By my fealty!" exclaimed Master Henry Sinclair—for he, indeed, was the captain—"By my fealty, boy, no harm shall come to you! I will swear thou art no spy, nor even a runaway, for truth is writ in honest English on thy face."

"I am an orphan, sir," said Clarissa, "and, as you see, destitute."

"And weary enough, I warrant," said Master Henry. "You wear the dress of a page?" he added, after a moment's pause.

Clarissa held down her head. "Ay, sir," she faltered, "I am a page, sir. You would find me a convenient lad, and a faithful. I can sing ballads, sir, and play on the harpsichord, sir, and tend on fair ladies."

"And on gallant cavaliers, I suppose?" said Master Henry. "But we will not call over thy qualities to-night. I will engage thee on the risk. There, quaff this cup of wine," he added, handing Clarissa a brimming tankard, "and then stretch thyself on yonder pallet."

Clarissa, as she took the cup from Master Henry, made a low bow, and having drank off the contents, and replaced the cup on the table, retired to the side of the bed. She threw herself on the pallet, and drawing the clothes closely round her, and commending herself to the care of Heaven, sank into a refreshing sleep.

CHAPTER XXIV.—THE TOWER OF LONDON.

SHOWING HOW THREE CHARACTERS OF THIS HISTORY ASSISTED DAME ALICE PERRERS TO ATTEMPT AN ESCAPE FROM THE TOWER OF LONDON, AND HOW FAR THEY SUCCEEDED.

ALTHOUGH Dame Alice Perrers was kept a close prisoner in the Tower of London, and persecuted to the utmost by the party of which she had once been the most formidable opponent, she was not inhibited from corresponding with her private friends; and though these latter were few in number, and insignificant in point of political influence, they were, for the most part, as steadfast and true to her as she had been to them. But of all her friends, private or political, there was none in whom she placed a confidence equal to that which she reposed in the mediciner. That person, indeed, was constantly watching for opportunities of doing her service, but, as frequently happens in the political world, disappointment and defeat had so depressed the spirits of her party, that it was evident that, while she was in confinement, little could be done in her behalf.

At this juncture the Jew advised her to attempt to escape from her prison, then—for the Bastile at Paris was not yet erected—considered the most secure in Europe. Dame Alice, with that daring which formed so peculiar a feature of her character, and which neither time nor circumstances could diminish, instantly approved of the project, and determined, with the Jew's assistance, to carry it into execution forthwith.

There was, however, one objection to this course which the mediciner had not duly weighed. He could not, as on reflection he became aware, undertake so perilous an enterprise unaided, and he knew not, so severe was the penalty that would follow detection, whom he could prevail on to assist him. At length, being unable to think of more able confederates, he resolved to secure the services of Master Simon Racket and Dick.

It was the third evening after his embassy to Leaden Hall, and just as Dick was quitting Miriam for the house of Master Simon,

that that person and the mediciner entered the chamber together. The mediciner beckoned Miriam to retire, and, as soon as she had quitted the room, addressed himself to Dick.

"My son," he began, "I have often noted, when you weened not I was making observation, that there is a quiet prudence conspicuous in your conduct which is unusual in a boy of your years; and for that reason I am about to employ you in a matter which is big with peril."

"Did I not say I would stand surety for him?" asked Master Simon.

"Tut, a pin!" exclaimed the Jew.

"I know not your purpose, father," said Dick, "but credit me, whatever it may be, thou hast only to say, 'Do this,' and it shall be done."

"Well spoken, boy," rejoined the mediciner. "Perseverance——"

"Accomplisheth many things," suggested Master Simon.

"Perseverance, Dick," resumed the Jew, "will make a man of you. But, to speak of the matter in hand, will you, do you think, have heart to join in a very perilous enterprise indeed?"

"Ay, certes, father."

Here Master Simon slapped Dick so heartily on the back, that, though he meant thus to express his entire approbation of his answer, and to assure him of his sincere affection for his person, he impelled him two or three feet from his seat.

"I told you so," he said, as he stooped to help Dick up, and, having assisted him to his seat, brushed down his garments with the cuff of his frock. "He is as bold a 'prentice as here and there one."

His enthusiasm made both Dick and the mediciner laugh; and when he comprehended that they were laughing at him, Master Simon laughed louder than either of them.

"'Tis comical, to be sure," he observed; "but you're a fortuneless dog, Dick, though, as worthy Master Salmon always argues, perseverance——"

"Come, brother Simon," said the mediciner, "no more of this. Will you," he added, turning to Dick, "help us to free a prisoner from the Tower?"

"As far as you will employ me, father," replied Dick.

"Then follow me straightway," said the mediciner, and Dick accordingly followed with Master Simon.

They quitted the house, and, passing through Aldgate, proceeded to London bridge. They passed on to the middle of the bridge, where was a chapel dedicated to our Lady; and from this edifice, which was formed in the side of the bridge, they descended by a spiral staircase to the river. Here they stepped into a boat, and muffled the oars with some shreds of blanket, and then, pushing off from the stairs, and giving way with their

oars, they shot through the centre arch towards the Tower. The night was very foggy, so that, without being observed by the sentinels, they were enabled to heave-to within pistol-shot of the ramparts, and here they proposed to remain till high tide favoured their landing.

Leaving for the present the hero of this history, and quitting the river for the prison, it is necessary that the chronicler should introduce the reader to the lady for whom this enterprise was undertaken.

Dame Alice Perrers had taken every precaution that the mediciner had beforehand recommended. She was confined in an upper chamber in that part of the fortress called the Wakefield Tower, from the casement of which she proposed to make her egress. The mediciner had provided her with a file, with which, after a week's arduous labour, she had contrived to cut through the two bars that guarded her casement. She had not, however, taken them from their place, and the warder, therefore, did not detect their inefficiency. She was provided, also, with a travesty, which, though it would not screen her from detection within the fortress, was, as will hereafter be manifest, essential to her purpose. She had been examining this attire, and had just placed it under the pillow of her bed, when, without prefacing his intrusion by any knock or other hint, the warder entered.

"A cavalier desires your audience," he said.

"I can prevent the entrance of none," said Dame Alice. "Let him approach."

Scarcely had Dame Alice uttered these words, half of which were inaudible to the warder, when Sir Alfred Sinclair was ushered in.

That ignoble cavalier, when he saw the tide turn against the party to which Dame Alice belonged, had attached himself to the strongest side; and as the apostles of a new state of things are always eager after respectable converts, and his rank lent him a respectability which his character did not possess, had thereby attained considerable political influence. None, notwithstanding the favours that he had received from her, had expressed greater animosity to Dame Alice Perrers; and it was chiefly through his instrumentality, seconded by the machinations of the Romish priesthood, that she now stood charged with the capital crime of high treason. But Dame Alice was duly informed of his proceedings, and felt assured that, if she could once gain her freedom, she might not only defy his utmost malice, but make him and his party quail beneath her frown.

"A thousand good-dens to your lordship," she cried, as Sir Alfred confronted her.

Sir Alfred's quick eyes were fixed on her as though they would search her heart; but her cheek wore its usual complexion, her eyes swam in the same azure, her bust, which had so often been

extolled as the centre of perfection, was as still as a summer evening, and the proudest and loveliest woman that ever entered London's black prison-house—whence so many of the proud and lovely have been led to the bloody block—met her enemy with a smile. But if such was the outward disposition of Dame Alice, her heart was writhing in the fetters which she had thrown round it; and if she had not given speedy expression to her feelings, and by this means relieved her bursting heart, she would probably, by the springing of a blood-vessel, have closed her career smiling.

"You are not in your costly bower now, proud dame," said Sir Alfred, amazed at her external firmness, "and yet you smile. Can it be true, what these crafty priests aver, that you are leagued with the fiend?"

"You came to exult here, did you?" asked Dame Alice. "Didst think, then, to find me a-weeping? Fool! Hound! I am Alice Perrers still!"

"These are no names for a noble knight," exclaimed Sir Alfred Sinclair; "and one, too, who would approve himself your friend—ay, approve it, dame. Grant me but one petition, and, besides betraying the secrets of my party, I will aid you to the uttermost. Refuse me, and I will rest not, day nor night, till I see your fair neck beneath the axe."

"And there, where you will never see me, I would acquit myself as now," said Dame Alice. "But prithee, since you have sketched me such a perspective, what does your petition seek?"

"Your hand," replied Sir Alfred.

Sometimes, when nigh the equator, a bark will be laying on the still bosom of the ocean as quietly as in the narrow bounds of her native dock; there will not be a ripple in the deep, not a speck on the blue expanse, and the sky will be as clear and smiling as light; and then, in that moment of repose, there will come a rushing sound like the hoarse roar of death, and the bark, standing aghast on the summit of a mountainous wave, will be tossed towards a black and frowning sky, and the water and sky and air, which but now seemed so gentle and lovely, will unite to effect her destruction. As suddenly as that visitation which mariners term a white squall, and as completely and as violently, did the deportment of Dame Alice Perrers undergo a change. She stamped her right foot furiously on the floor; the blood rushed to her cheeks; a quick tremble, affecting even her speech, pervaded her frame; and she clenched her small fists, and grated her white teeth, as though she were suffering from an involuntary convulsion.

"By my honour as a woman," she exclaimed, "if to be thy wife, or even thy friend, were to place me on England's throne, with the Bishop of Rome to draw my car, and his black-hearted priests to bear my train—if all this were to be," she continued, as Sir Alfred, mimicking her gesture, caught her by the wrist—"if all

this were to be, I would spurn thee as I do now." And, raising her clenched fist as she spake, she struck him with all her force on his mouth. "So ho!" she screamed. "Without, there! Help!"

It was well for Dame Alice Perrers, and for Sir Alfred Sinclair himself, that the help for which she called so lustily was within hail. The warder, thinking that eaves-dropping was an important part of his duty, had been listening to the preceding colloquy; and no sooner did his prisoner invoke assistance than he burst into the room.

"Marry, Sir Knight!" he exclaimed, as he saw Sir Alfred's naked rapier raised in the air, "wouldst strike a fair lady? I am but a churl, as one may say, but even I would do battle for a woman."

Sir Alfred sheathed his rapier, and, drawing a kerchief from within his placart, wiped away the blood from his mouth—for as she had thrown all her strength, which was not a little, into the blow, Dame Alice had drawn forth blood.

"I thank you, warder," said Dame Alice, "for your dutiful courtesy. And now, I prithee, remove this fellow from my presence."

"You list not my conditions, then?" said Sir Alfred, with a sneer. "Beware, proud dame, how you reject them! for by my oath of chivalry——"

"Which you have broken but now," interrupted Dame Alice. "But prithee, no more of this," she continued. "Remove him, Sir Warder; remove him straight, or the parliament shall be advised of your neglect."

"Come, come, gallant sir," said the warder, "let me shew you the way out, sir. I would not offend you for a trifle, sir; but 'tis mine office, you know, to protect the lady."

"A murrain on thee, jackanapes!" exclaimed Sir Alfred Sinclair. "Is a lord of the parliament to be controlled by thee?"

"'Tis mine office, sir," replied the warder; "and you must needs comply. I prithee provoke me not to summon aid."

"I will come to-morrow with a sufficient warrant," said Sir Alfred—"And then, proud dame," he added, glaring fiercely at Dame Alice, "be thou prepared for sudden tidings."

"I defy you!" exclaimed Dame Alice.

"We will try you, then, to-morrow," returned Sir Alfred; and, followed by the impatient warder, he quitted the room.

When Dame Alice was left to herself, and heard the warder lock and chain her chamber-door on the outside, she endeavoured, by anticipating the change of circumstances which her proposed escape from the Tower would effect, to recover her equanimity. She was aware that among the nobility and the disciples of Wickliffe she had numerous steady friends; and as she traversed the narrow limits of her chamber, and dwelt on the almost invincible

obstacles that opposed her freedom, she felt that, if she could overcome those obstacles, the romance which success would throw round her name, and the character for courage which it would win for her, would, while it depressed the spirits of her enemies, inspire her friends with confidence and resolution.

"Ay," she muttered, as this consequence occurred to her, "I will make the proudest of them all bend yet. They shall see Alice Perrers in her meridian, and when I fall thence, my decline shall be like the sun's—more glorious than my noon. 'Tis time, now, to begin."

As she spake she advanced to her bed-side. She threw off the greater part of her apparel, and, tossing it on one side, took the travesty aforementioned from beneath her pillow, and arrayed herself therein. She then drew aside the drapery of her case-ment, and having placed a lighted taper in the embrasure—which was the signal appointed by the Jew—waited the arrival of her friends.

The clock was striking the hour of midnight, and the lieutenant had just gone his first rounds, when, favoured by the high tide, the boat containing Dick and his confederates pushed close in under the ramparts of the Tower. The night, as has been before observed, was very foggy, and they were consequently screened from observation. When they had pushed close under the rampart, and listened a few moments till the heavy tread of the sentinel became inaudible, the mediciner stood up in the boat, and unlocking a locker in the stern, which had been concealed by an old sail, drew thence about fourteen or fifteen feet of rope ladder. This, which was secured at the end to two iron hooks, he threw to the top of the rampart; but it was not till after he had been twice foiled that he succeeded in lodging it.

"Dick," he whispered, after a moment's pause, "you must ascend first, because, if the ladder bear not you, we must alter our plan; but if you can ascend, and you find all quiet, you can fix the hooks more securely. Then pull your right-hand rope, to signify to us your safety, and we will straight ascend."

Dick accordingly mounted the ladder, and ascended cautiously to the rampart. All was still, and the ladder seemed to hold firm, so he gave the signal which the mediciner had appointed.

Master Simon Racket was the next to ascend. He was quickly followed by the mediciner, who, drawing Dick and Master Simon to the edge of the rampart, placed his hand over the mouth of each.

He whispered so low, that though they stopped their breath to catch his slightest articulation, they could scarcely comprehend what he said. "When the sentinel approaches, Simon, hold your breath. Let him pass us a step or two; then catch you his left arm, and leave his right to me. You, Dick, must then press this plaster over his mouth, and then——"

That slow, heavy tread, which denotes the watchful sentinel, was now audible. In a few minutes it became more distinct, but so dense was the fog, that though he passed within a few feet of them, nor Dick, nor Master Simon, nor the mediciner, were discovered. Indeed, though they peered their utmost, none of the trio could see the person for whom they looked, but they knew, by the nearness of his tread, his exact situation. The Jew tugged Master Simon by the frock, and the next moment, as his caliver dropped from his hand, the arms of the sentinel were secured. He would, however, have raised an alarm, but before he could cry out—nay, before he could draw a breath, Dick had pressed the pitch-plaster over his mouth.

“We have made a beginning,” said the mediciner, tripping him up. “Do your utmost now,” he added, as he tied his hands and feet together; “for your utmost will be but little.”

They drew up the rope-ladder, and coiled it up, and then descended from the ramparts.

It required an experienced foot—for no eye, however penetrating, could have peered through the compact darkness—to tread the way to the Wakefield Tower; but the mediciner would have made it out blindfolded. He was, however, obliged to proceed with great caution, and when he reached the prison of Dame Alice, and discerned a faint glimmer in the upper casement, the clock struck the half hour after twelve. In another half-hour, as he was well aware, an officer would again go the rounds, and then, if they were not free of the Tower, they would assuredly be discovered.

The mediciner took a stone from his pocket, and threw it up at the casement. In a moment after, a slight cough, which assured him of Dame Alice’s readiness, answered him from above; and the mediciner straightway set about groping for something that the dame had beforehand agreed to let down. He grabbed the end of a silken rope, and tied it round the hooks of the ladder, which Dame Alice, who held the other end of the rope, instantly pulled up.

“Are you ready?” asked the mediciner.

“Ay,” replied the lady, “but I can get out but one of the bars. My strength will not serve me with the other.”

This was a contingency that none of the party had anticipated. Dick, however, suggested an expedient which the mediciner recommended to Dame Alice.

“Try to force the standing bar with the bar you have taken out,” he said; and, as he spoke, the clock struck the three quarters past twelve.

There was now only a quarter of an hour left them, and it was full five minutes, owing as much to her excessive hurry as her want of strength, before Dame Alice forced the bar. At length, however, they heard it snap; and the mediciner and Master Simon



3rd Chapter

James, the Pirron, descends from the Wakefield Tower

Pages

held the ladder firm. It was too short, for the window was twenty feet from the ground, but they held it up as high as they could, and threw all their strength into their arms.

Dame Alice descended the steps with a resolute heart. She gained the bottom of the ladder, and, holding on by the side-ropes, placed one foot on the Jew and one on Master Simon, and sprang on the ground.

"Hush!" whispered the Jew.

It is natural that women and boys should be timid, and Dame Alice Perrers and Dick, even before the mediciner spoke, felt their hearts beat quick. The noise that they heard sounded not like a noise of this world. It was a rustling, like that which a body makes in moving through long grass—not like that either, but like the rustling of a dead man's shroud. It came closer and closer, and the whole party, as it became more distinct, reflected that they were in the Tower of London,

"With many a foul and midnight murder fed,"

where the fair and virtuous and vile, the martyr and patriot and slave, the warrior and traitor and coward, the chaste and beautiful and free, have been thrown by the arm of tyranny, or fettered by the hand of justice, and left, without a ray of hope in their dark dungeons, to pine and waste and wither, and dream of the bloody executioner and the red scaffold, till, worn out with anguish, and writhing under the torture of those diabolical instruments which a ruthless church had not only countenanced but invented, they have found the axe a compassionate friend, and hell itself a home. Such was the terrific reflection that rushed across the mind of those four persons, and at the same moment a mass of white drapery brushed against their bodies. None of them, however, could say, then or afterwards, whether the appearance that they had beheld was ghostly or no; for, as the greatest of moralists has observed, we know so little of the other world that we cannot say whether such things be.

The mediciner was the first to recover his self-possession.

"It wants scarcely five minutes to morning," he whispered. "Follow quickly."

They pushed on accordingly; but it struck one o'clock some minutes before they reached the rampart. They listened a moment:—all was still as death.

"The officer has left not his ward yet," whispered Master Simon.

"I think no," replied the Jew.

"Let us onward, then," said Dame Alice. "I tremble till I am out of this unhallowed fortress."

"Hist!" whispered Dick; and they listened.

"'Tis nothing," said the mediciner, "though I marvel that we hear not the guard."

They ascended the steps, and gained the rampart. There was the sentinel, laying in the posture that they had left him in, and, as far as they could see, asleep. Dame Alice, who had almost stumbled over him, caught up his caliver, which was laying beside him. They advanced to the edge of the rampart.

"Surrender!" cried an authoritative voice; and they perceived that the guard, which they thought had not yet quitted ward, had been lying in ambush for their coming.

"Back!" exclaimed Dame Alice. "Back, I say! or, 'by the God that made me, I will fire!"

There was a burst of laughter, for the guard treated her threat as a joke, but she levelled her piece, pointed it at a man who had placed himself between her and the river, and fired. Dick, though there was a great uproar, heard a deep groan above all the oaths and exclamations of the guard. He was the last who had ascended, and it was so dark that even his outline was not seen, and as he bethought him of this circumstance, and perceived that there was a possibility of escaping, he stole cautiously down from the ramparts.

To attempt to get out of the Tower, now that its warders were alarmed, would, he knew, be madness, and he therefore determined to grope about for some place of concealment. He kept close to the wall, and walked on as softly as he could, stopping, as he fancied that he heard a footstep, to assure himself that all was silent. He had continued thus about a quarter of an hour, and turned several angles in the wall, when, as he pressed on, he fell back against a door which stood a couple of feet inward, and which the abrupt percussion of his body threw open. Having listened a moment, and heard nothing to indicate that it was already tenanted, he entered.

The room was filled with logs of wood, cut ready for firing, and Dick, who discovered this circumstance by groping round, conceived it to be a lumber-room. Somewhat re-assured by this discovery, which held out a promise of safety till the morning, he laid himself down in the far corner, and though he had determined to keep awake, in order that he might, if necessary, be prepared to retreat, suffered sleep to overcome him.

He was awakened by a gentle kick, and, on opening his eyes, perceived that it was broad day. He perceived, also, that he had been awakened by the foot of a personage to whose acquaintance he thought that he might safely lay claim.

"Marry," exclaimed this individual, "I'll be sworn you're some housebreaker, or vagabonder, or one of that kidney. What may your business be, please you, in the king's Tower of London here?"

"What!" replied Dick, "dost not acknowledge me, Dame Roaster? Dost forget your Dickon, who used to come to the Tower Real with Master Simon?"

"Hey! What say you?" impatiently replied the cook—for such was the office which Dame Roaster held in the establishment of Dame Alice Perrers, and such, as she afterwards informed Dick, the post which she now held in the establishment of the Tower lieutenant—"Are you Dick Whittington, indeed?"

"That am I," returned Dick, surprised that his identity should be for a moment questioned.

"And you were one of the party last night?" rejoined the cook. "Hush!" she added; "you need tell me nothing. The story is all over the city by this time. There now, fear nothing, but take up some of these logs, and follow me to the kitchen."

Dick did as he was desired, and on reaching the kitchen, where there were several other domestics, was sharply rebuked by the cook for an offence of which he was innocent.

"And so," she said, "instead of doing your mother's errand, you must need loiter to look at the Tower, must you? I'll teach you to use dispatch, I warrant"—and she gave Dick a hearty cuff on the ear. "There," she continued, as she gave him some broken bread and meat which she had wrapped up in a napkin; "take that to your poor mother; and mind, sirrah, if you loiter, I shall hear of it, and I will requite you. Your way is over the Tower green."

Dick took the hint, and placing the cook's present under his arm, quitted the kitchen.

The lodgings of the Lieutenant of the Tower, from which Dick now issued, were situate in one corner of the green, or, more properly, the great court of the Tower, and, without pausing to survey the structures with which it was crowded, Dick pushed over this court to the Byward tower. He passed the Stone Kitchen, which then, as now, served as a canteen for the Tower garrison, and, though several men-at-arms were leaning against the walls of the Bell and Byward towers, passed unquestioned over the drawbridge.

There was now one gate only between him and liberty, but that gate, unfortunately, was guarded with greater vigilance than all the others together. Dick, however, was not aware of this circumstance, and he pushed on, without abating his pace, to the Bulwark gate. But as he approached this black structure, whence he had hoped to emerge safely on Tower Hill, a challenge from a sentinel, who stood close beside him, suddenly startled his equanimity.

"Ho you, there!" cried the sentinel. "Whence come you, sirrah?"

Dick, fancying that he was now shut out from freedom, was unable to reply. His first impulse was to retreat, and shelter himself under the wing of Dame Roaster; but reflecting, the next moment, that this step would excite suspicion, and that, if the guard were so resolved, nothing could prevent his capture, he determined to stand his ground. He could not, however, entirely repress his

fears, which were displayed on his pale cheek, nor refrain from shrinking back a pace or two, when the sentinel repeated his challenge.

"Ho, sirrah!" cried the sentinel. "What hast thou in thy bundle, thou mute monkey, eh?"

The artifice of the cook instantly flashed across Dick's mind, and, as his courage revived, he commenced untying the bundle.

"Nothing, an' please your worship," he said, "save some broken meat, presented me but now, and, as I can have certified, honestly come by."

"We must be assured of this," replied the soldier. "Come with me, sirrah; and one of the yeomen will examine thee."

Dick accordingly retraced his steps, in company with the sentry, to the Byward tower. Here he was examined by an exon, or yeoman of the guard; but as his resolutions were quickly taken, and the few minutes occupied by his passage from the Bulwark gate to the Byward tower afforded him time to reflect, he was prepared with answers to all the questions which were put to him. Having, therefore, acquitted himself of all suspicion of larceny, and given a satisfactory reference to Dame Roaster, who appeared in court to corroborate his statement, he was dismissed, and suffered to depart from the Tower. He came out at the foot of Great Tower Hill, and passing on to the Minories, and thence to Aldgate, proceeded to his master's house.

THE THIRD PERIOD.—MANHOOD.

CHAPTER I.—THE LOVE-LORN.

WHICH, AS IT CONTAINS SEVERAL INTERESTING LOVE PASSAGES, WILL CALL FOR MUCH SYMPATHY FROM ANY SENTIMENTAL YOUNG LADY WHO READS IT.

UPWARDS of seven years after the morning of Dick Whittington's escape from the Tower—within which fortress he left Master Simon Racket and the mediciner incarcerated—a tall, brawny young man, whose worn apparel, cut in the fashion called close and short, savoured of poverty and wretchedness, walked hastily forth from the house of Master Fitzwarren, in Leadenhall-street. The evening was very dark, and the rain was descending in torrents, which circumstance urged the pedestrian, whose russet clothes and tattered buskins were soon saturated with rain, to quicken his pace. He stopped before a house in the vicinity of Aldgate, and raising the latch, and pushing open the door, ascended a stair which led to the upper chambers.

Having reached the summit of the stair, and groped his way thence to the end of a dark passage, he tapped gently at an inner door, which was straightway opened.

“So ho, Dick Whittington!” said a short, close-set man, who, while he held an infant to his breast with his left arm, extended his right hand to the stranger. “What news, my heart?”

“None, Master Simon,” replied Dick; “but I pray you to let me pass, for, by'r Lady, if you'll believe the oath, I'm wet to the skin.”

Master Simon, as his friend thus delivered himself, pulled him within the threshold, and was drawing him across the room to a large fire, which blazed and crackled on the capacious hearth, when he was opposed in his progress by three little urchins in bedgowns, who, hallooing each other forwards, and calling on the stranger by

the endearing name of gossip,* seemed determined that no one but themselves should offer him the slightest courtesy. A buxom-looking dame, who was preparing a skillet of wassail at the fire, called them back, and threatened them with a melancholy-featured birch which hung over the mantel; but detecting something in her face which was at variance with the tone of her voice, the children persisted in advancing.

"Well, well," said Dick, as he successively caught up each of them, and suffered them to caress him, "I must give each of you a kiss, I suppose. There, now let me pass, I pray you"—and pushing them gently aside, and advancing to the fire, Dick saluted the cheek of Dame Eleanor Racket.

"Sit you down, Dick," said the latter person, "and warm your 'numbed limbs. You shall presently have some wassail."

Dick sat down on a rude but comfortable settle, which, as it had been drawn up to the fire previous to his entrance, and had not been occupied by any of the family, had most likely been placed there in expectation of his coming. As he removed his hood, and the fire cast its red light over his face, he seemed, for a moment or two, to be lost in reflection. There was something in his appearance, indeed, that bespoke a pensive disposition. His oval-shaped face, which bore in every feature the stamp of intelligence, was somewhat careworn, though, between the eye and the mouth, it was marked with that animation that denotes a sanguine temperament. His full, dark eyes, too, notwithstanding that they appeared too thoughtful for one who had scarce crossed the threshold of maturity, and thus harmonized well with his broad, high forehead, occasionally emitted flashes of a less serious character; and about his mouth, which was surmounted by a slight moustache, there was a playful expression that counteracted the gravity of his other features. The neatness with which, notwithstanding their age and shabbiness, each of his habiliments was ordered to his form, and the nicety, not to say taste, with which his moustachios and hair were arranged, shewed that he had taken some pains with his toilet, and—an excellent quality in a young man—that he was not indifferent to his personal appearance.

"I wish, dame," said Master Simon, a few minutes after Dick's entrance—"I wish, dame," he said, as he helped himself to a cup of the wassail, and after draining it to the bottom, and smacking his lips with an air of relish, continued, "that you would put these dear little pledges to bed. They will tease Dickon to death, bless their little hearts!" This benediction he put in as an apology for the tone in which he spoke, but it seemed, from the look which he gave her, that his patience could no longer brook the caresses of the artless infant.

* Godfather.

"Remove them not for me, dame," said Dick, as Dame Eleanor, who was a most dutiful wife, and who knew his temper, hastened to comply with the wishes of her husband—"I am too fond of them to be vexed at what they do. I only wish, as there cannot be too many Master Simons, that one of them were a boy."

"'Tis my misfortune," observed Master Simon, smiling at the compliment, "that they are all girls; but, as worthy Master Salmon says,——"

Here Dame Eleanor, hastily dropping the infant into a capacious cradle, ran behind her husband's chair, and, clapping her hand over his mouth, forbade him, under divers severe penalties, to finish his sentence.

"Well, a truce with you," said Master Simon, when he was able to articulate; only, as you love quiet, put these noisy young nymphs to bed. There—there," he continued, as he kissed each of his children; "good-den to you, my hearts. Well, Dick," he resumed, when his dame had removed the children, "cheer thee up, for perseverance——"

"Ay, worthy sir," interrupted Dick, "so you often say, and, sooth to speak, I doubt it not. 'Tis a grievous trial, though, to be working on, and pushing circumstance aside, and brooking ill-usage, for years! for years!"

"And I say," rejoined Master Simon, catching up Dick's hand, and looking in his face, "is not there One who watches how we bear this grievous trial? Is not there One, I would question you, who can help you on, and who, if you fail not yourself, will help you on, eh?"

"True, true!" replied Dick; and one here, too"—and he pressed Master Simon's hand—"who has never forsaken me,—me who——"

"Art a fool?" exclaimed Master Simon. "Wouldst anger me? Wouldst cast obligation on me, eh? But come, Dick, times will change anon; cheer thee up, man."

And Master Simon poured out a cup of the wassail, which was now ready for use, and presented it to Dick.

"Hast heard," he resumed, after he had quaffed a cup of the wassail, which, as need scarcely be observed, was a liquor composed of apples, honey, and ale—"how Dame Alice Perrers has been acquitted by the lords of parliament?"

"That have I not," replied Dick.

"She has, then," continued Master Simon, "and chiefly, as I take it, through the influence of Lord Walter de Windsor."

"The same who was deputy in Ireland?" asked Dick.

"Ay," replied Master Simon. "And how think you the dame hath requited him?"

"How?" asked Dick.

"She hath given him her hand in marriage," rejoined Master Simon.

"Was it to this Walter de Windsor, or the Duke of Lancaster, that you and the mediciner owed your liberation from the Tower?"

"To both," said Master Simon. "The mediciner sent to the Duke the morning after our attachment, and his highness interfered forthwith; but he would not, I think, have obtained our discharge, had not Lord Walter come to the rescue."

"He is a noble cavalier, and a chivalrous," observed Dick.

"Nevertheless," rejoined Master Simon, "the dame would scarce have accepted his suit but for the mediciner. She had taken a fancy to Master Henry, the young cavalier at the hall; and, only the Jew told her that he was dead—of which we have no certain assurance—would for his sake have remained a widow."

"She is a wondrous woman," said Dick—"But hath aught been heard of this Master Henry?"

"No," replied Master Simon. "That house, I fear me, has fallen for ever."

"I fear it, too," observed Dick. "'Tis now eight years since Master Cobbs quitted us. Three years, as I understand, were a tedious voyage; yet have no tidings of him been received. Haply—for we can hardly put faith in those paynim Moors—he has been sold to slavery."

"Mayhap, indeed," said Master Simon, mournfully.

This conjecture seemed to depress the spirits of both the friends, and, despite the cheering smile of Dame Eleanor Racket, who, having deposited her offspring in their respective beds, had taken her accustomed seat by the fire, and notwithstanding that the wassail, of which another skillet-full had been prepared, steamed and hissed in a large bowl on the table, neither of them spoke without effort. The temporary exhilaration which, during their colloquy, had spread itself over Dick's face, gave way for the dejected look that was more in keeping with his appearance; and as he rose to depart, and took leave of Master Simon and his wife, a deep and mournful sigh evinced the profundity of his feelings.

"Good-den, Dickon," said Master Simon, as Dick passed down the stairs. "Cheer thee up; and remember, that perseverance——"

The conclusion of Master Simon's speech, owing to Dick's having turned an angle of the stairs, was inaudible; but as he generally sought to cheer Dick's spirits by the recitation of a certain proverb, which set forth how that many things were accomplished by perseverance, Dick inferred the moral from the commencement. He descended the stairs, and groping his way to the street, proceeded to the residence of the Jew mediciner.

He knocked at the door, and Miriam, who had now shot up into womanhood, straightway admitted him.

"I have tarried for you some time, Dick," she said. "I fear me," she added, as she preceded him to the upper chamber, "you are becoming neglectful."

"Of whom, fair mistress?" asked Dick.

"Of no person," said Miriam, seating herself by his side, "but of your studies."

It was easy to see, though she threw as much composure into her manner as she could command, that Miriam had been awaiting Dick's arrival with a greater degree of impatience than she chose to admit. Perhaps—for her father was from home—she was timid, and glad to have the protection of a sturdy young bachelor like Dick; perhaps—and this is the more likely—she would have preferred the protection and company of Dick to that of any person under the sun. It is certain, though she sought to disguise her feelings, that directly he presented himself a flush spread over her cheek, which, with the dazzling expression of her dark eyes, sufficiently testified that he was a welcome visitor.

"You are very 'complished now, Dickon," she observed, after they had been seated about a quarter of an hour. "Remember you how, when you first came here, you were puzzled to repeat your alphabet?"

"Ay," replied Dick; "and remember, also, how you troubled yourself to teach me. We have loved each other ever since."

Miriam blushed; her bosom heaved quick, and she looked confused. "You were always kind, Dick," she said.

"And so are you," rejoined Dick, "even as a sister."

"Sister!" echoed Miriam. "God of Israel, forbid!"

"Forbid what?" cried Dick, amazed. "But, true—I pray you to forgive my assurance. I am, in sooth, unworthy to be your brother, fair mistress. I spoke hastily."

"Oh, you are very—very good!" sobbed Miriam, placing her two arms on his right shoulder, and resting her head thereon, so that, as he turned round to look at her, her long, black tresses fell over her fair cheeks, and hiding the blushes which had there spread themselves, as though they were ashamed that even those mellow cheeks should be seen, swept over her neck and bosom:—"Oh, you are very—very good, Dick! I am not good enough to be your sister. I would not be your sister for the whole world"

"Well, then, I will call you so no more," said Dick, clutching her hand; "though, to speak sooth, yours is a strange fantasy."

"Fantasy! call you it?" said Miriam, as she raised her head, and, after staring for a moment at the tapestry opposite, drew her left hand—for her right was held by Dick—over her starting eyes, as though she would banish some fearful illusion. "Ay, it is a fantasy. Tell me, Dick; do fantasies sleep—no, not sleep, but live, and breathe their distempered whisperings in here?" and she pressed her hand on her bursting bosom. "Do fantasies 'company you to the pillow? and stay with you in dreams? and rise with you on the morrow? and whether you sleep or sit or stand, walk or converse or muse, bide with you still, like the heart's

blood that they live on? If fantasies do this, Dick, I have such a fantasy; and, oh! oh dear! it is a very mournful one, indeed."

"God have a care of you, poor maiden!" said Dick.

"Ay," sobbed Miriam, throwing herself on her knees, and burying her head in her hands. "God have a care of me! God keep me from distraction! God shield me from despair!"

"Come, come, mistress," said Dick, as he raised her to her seat: "this is unwonted. What is it that thus moves you? You were wont to tell me everything. Wherefore, then, do you keep this from me?"

"It has gone off now," replied Miriam. "It is a fit that comes over me; and I am very weak—very weak, indeed, and cannot restrain me. There—I am better now. I shall be well presently."

"Are you avised of that?" asked Dick, as he kissed her hand. "Go to, then! Why, one would fancy you were in love."

"And would it be a sin to love, Dick?" asked Miriam, as she fixed her dark eyes full on him, and peered, if one may so express it, into his heart.

"Oh, no!" replied Dick, "or I were a grievous sinner."

"Dost love any one, then?" demanded Miriam, with sudden animation.

"Do I?" replied Dick. "Ay, do I; and so deeply, so devotedly, so hopelessly, that I were a fit one to sing you a sonato. You see now, my love hath such weight with me, that though my ambition would lead me to other lands, and haply advance me to high fortune, yet choose I rather to keep secret the knowledge you have taught me, as well as the craft I have learned from Master Simon, forasmuch as I would ever, even as I am now, be nigh the lady of my heart."

"Now!" exclaimed Miriam, as her eyes, which overflowed with pleasure, were turned in the opposite direction: "how mean you, Dick?"

"I may anger you by saying?" replied Dick.

"No, no!" returned Miriam, impatiently. "Who is the lady?"

"You will think me presumptuous?" rejoined Dick.

"No, no! you are worthy any one. Who, then, is the lady?"

"Mistress Alice Fitzwarren," said Dick.

The human heart, riding on the billows of life, may sometimes be compared to a gallant ship on the ocean. And, certainly, it is a deep and incomprehensible mystery—that manning of the heart which anticipation of evil sometimes effects; for as the mariner prepares for a gale, of which he is warned by portentous appearances, so we brace up our energies, furl up our hopes, consult the compass of religion, and prepare to meet the evils which "cast their shadows before." But who can prepare against the ruthless hurricane, that, even as its first hoarse whisper sweeps

through the air, rushes forward on the wings of destruction? Like that hurricane—as fiercely, as abruptly, as completely—did Dick’s confession dash over Miriam’s heart; and that heart, that was so fond and so pure and so sensitive, that was teeming, but one short moment before, with the efflorescence of vernal hope, whose pulsation was so musical and quiet and regular,—that gay young heart was a wreck.

And yet—poor, broken-hearted thing!—she did not weep, nor even sigh. She laughed, though. Her brain was on fire, and her head wheeled round and round and round, and her bosom heaved and sank and heaved again, and she laughed. There were all her dreams of bliss, all her hopes of earthly happiness, all her air-built castles, which, even to the moment before, she had thought as durable as structures of adamant—there they were, prostrate and crumbled; and the young sufferer laughed. One might have told her, five minutes previous, or she herself might have thought, that it would prove thus, and though it would have surpassed her belief, because she was unwilling to give it credit, she would have wept; but now that she knew it for certain, now that there was not so much of hope in the entire wilderness of life as would shed a glowworm’s light over her path—now, in this extremity and depth of wretchedness, she laughed. There was, indeed, a spasm passed over her face—a spasm that effectually checked any effusion of tears; and then, as the blood forsook her cheeks, and the speculation left her eyes, she laughed.

“I thought you would laugh at me,” sighed Dick; and Miriam laughed on.

“I could weep,” continued Dick, “were it manly.”

How the tables and cushions and tapestry and walls and tomes and charts and papers wheeled round before those dark eyes! She tried to fix one object, or to scrutinize another, or to review a third; but no, so soon as they met her giddy eye, they danced away. This was very sickening—very horrible; but it only infused energy into her hysterical laugh. There is something so unearthly in that unnatural peal—something so like the laugh which, if it were possible for disembodied spirits to indulge in laughter, one would think appropriate in a ghost, that even when it comes on the ear unexpectedly and for the first time, it grates our most sturdy feelings; and Dick, having waited some moments in expectation that it would be arrested, and finding that it became more and more energetic, was at length conscious of its morbid character. He rose instantly, and seizing a cruet of vinegar which stood on the sideboard, and pushing her raven ringlets aside, applied the vinegar to her temples. A loud knocking at the street-door called him away. He descended the stairs, and was rejoiced to find, on reaching the door, that the person without was the mediciner.

“Haste, father!” said Dick, as he grasped the mediciner’s

brawny hand. "Miriam has been seized with a fit, which came over her as I was talking with her, and I am alarmed for her safety."

"I thank you, my son," said the mediciner; and, without waiting for the light, he darted up the stairs, and sprang to the side of his daughter.

"Reach me yonder vial, my son," he said to Dick, as the latter entered the chamber.

He took the vial from Dick, and, having withdrawn the cork, held it to the nostrils of Miriam. She revived almost immediately. The mediciner, however, still held the nostrum to her nose, and, by his directions, Dick again applied the vinegar to her temples.

"Thank you, father—thank you, thank you, Dick," she murmured, after an interval of a few minutes. "I am better now.—I am quite well," she added.

"How did this hap?" asked the mediciner of Dick.

"Even as I spoke with her, father," replied Dick. "I thought, at first, she was laughing at what I said; but as she continued, and I knew my words were no matter for jest, I perceived that her laugh savoured more of woe than mirth."

"Even so," said the mediciner. "When the heart-strings crack, the mouth will grin."

Dick resumed his original seat, and endeavoured, by adopting a light tone of discourse, to exhilarate Miriam's spirits. This, however, he was unable to accomplish, and as the conversation began to flag, and the clock of Saint Michael, Cornhill, warned him to depart, he rose to take leave.

"You will be here to-morrow?" said Miriam.

"Certes, mistress," replied Dick, and, bidding her and her father "good-den," he sallied forth.

The rain still continued. The streets were ankle-deep in mud, and here and there, where the water had collected in large puddles, Dick slipped in up to the middle of his leg. He reached his master's house, and having inflicted several knocks on the door, waiting between each knock till his patience was exhausted, was at length admitted by Dame Grammont.

He betook himself to his garret straightway. As he stretched himself on his humble couch, which was so short that his feet protruded from the bottom, he lucubrated on the events of the evening. There was at least one thing, he thought, on which he could congratulate himself, and that was, the disclosure which he had made to Miriam. The discomposure of the latter person, and her horrible laugh, that rang in his ears still, were to him unaccountable; for he never once conjectured, what a more experienced person would have perceived, that they were occasioned by the communication that he had imparted to her. She had, he imagined, laughed at his folly, and the laugh had overpowered her, and as she yielded to its influence, which shot forthwith through

her fragile frame, it changed its nature, and burthened the heart that it was designed to lighten. And after all, by the revelation of his secret, he had relieved his bosom of a weary tenant; for not the frog that has been found alive in the heart of a massive stone, where for centuries he has been shut out from light and life, can pant more for freedom, or, as one would imagine, for air, than does that little secret of the heart for a friend's caress. Gratified, then, that he had revealed his secret to Miriam, from whom, notwithstanding what had transpired, he was certain of meeting sympathy, Dick fell asleep, and, as a matter of course, dreamt of Alice Fitzwarren.

Several days passed; and on each day did Dick visit the mediciner's daughter; but, as she did not refer to it herself, he avoided all allusion to the subject which he had nearest at heart. One afternoon he was engaged in cleaning the windows of Master Fitzwarren's sitting-room. He was sitting on the sill of a window, the exterior of which he was cleaning, when Mistress Alice entered the chamber. She did not observe him, for the window which he was cleaning was in the further angle, and the deep embrasure in which he sat, and the drapery that surrounded it, screened him from observation. These circumstances, however, did not prevent him from observing her, and no sooner was he sensible of her vicinity, and aware, from her manner, that she was unconscious of his *surveillance*, than the business on which he was employed entirely slipped his memory. He had no heart, at that particular moment, for any person or thing but Mistress Alice; and Mistress Alice, whose motions he was watching so anxiously, was weeping. What obdurate person had caused those tears to flow? Who, he should like to know, would dare to dim the lustre of those soft blue eyes, which, if he might presume to offer his unbiassed opinion, would make a vernal paradise of a parched wilderness?

She was standing in the middle of the room, with her kerchief, which she held with both her hands, raised to her eyes. Her person was tall, yet not too tall, and so exquisitely moulded, and so easy and elegant and light, that one would have sworn that it was the repository of all the sweet virtues of woman. Her neck and shoulders were bare; and the upper region of her voluptuous bosom, vouching with its transparent whiteness for the purity of her thoughts, peered above her vest. Her dress, in accordance with the prevailing fashion, was made skin-tight, so that, as scarce a muscle could be moved without being observed, the symmetry and exact disposition of her limbs were visible to every eye. Her oval face stamped her an English beauty. There was the expansive white forehead, the delicate eye-brow, the large azure eye, the round cheek,

“ ————— whose red and white
Nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on,”

and which colours were so gently blended, and so skilfully, that it was impossible to tell where the red began or where the white ended.

Such was the lady on whom Dick had been gazing for several minutes ; yet he gazed not, as one would have supposed, with a mournful eye, but with all the light of his soul, and all its power of expression, all its gushing tenderness and volubility concentrated in his radiant stare. She was weeping—wasting the waters of love, which, in his opinion, were placed in her heart, not to embitter it, but, as fountains are placed in gardens, only to adorn the scene, and refresh the eye, and cool the temperature. Surely, though he was so incomparably beneath her, there could be no harm in asking what she ailed ; and Heaven could testify that, if she would deign to accept his service, he would traverse the world to do her right.

“ Grace for your servant, lady,” he said, as he approached her. “ I am bold to speak ; but if you lack my help, and will accept its best, you will find me bold to do.”

“ Dickon,” cried Mistress Alice, starting round, and suffering a bright blush to spread over her neck and face—“ how you have startled me !—What means this intrusion ?”

Dick’s lips quivered. “ ’Twas rude in me to speak, my mistress,” he said, “ and done without warrant. But, credit me, I intruded not. I was doing there.” And he pointed to the window which he had been cleaning.

“ And you pleased to play the spy on my motions, did you ?”

“ Heaven forefend, lady !” said Dick, looking downwards.

“ Wherefore, then, did you accost me ?”

“ I inquired what troubled you,” replied Dick. “ If it be aught that I can remedy, and you will advise me thereof, I am ready to peril life in your behoof.”

“ I know you are, Dickon,” said Mistress Alice, blushing. “ You had ever the heart and hand to serve me ; but my present distress, which is great indeed, passes your ability.”

“ May I question its nature ?” asked Dick.

“ I will tell it you,” replied Mistress Alice. “ My father, whom I love before all the world, has just told me that he would I were married.”

“ Married !” echoed Dick.

“ Ay,” returned Mistress Alice. “ Why, what ails you, Dickon ?—How your lips tremble !—how pale you have turned !”

“ I hope you will be happy, gentle mistress,” said Dick. “ By’r Lady,” he added, “ I am neglecting the windows.” And he turned away, and stepped towards the window, more to hide his emotion than from any desire to resume his labours.

“ Stop, Dick,” cried Mistress Alice. “ You are ill, I ween. What ails you ?”

“ Nothing, lady,” returned Dick.

"No, you have your natural colour now," rejoined the other; "but when I said I was to be married, you were pale enow."

"I was thinking, mistress, how ill I should fare when you were gone," said Dick. "'Twere hard times for me, then; and I might seek my fortune in foreign parts."

"Was that all you thought?" said Mistress Alice, in a tone approaching to petulance. "Have not you the curiosity to ask my suitor's name and degree?"

"Such question were unseemly in me, lady," returned Dick.

"What if I tell you, then?"

"I should be proudful," replied Dick.

"Well," said Mistress Alice, "for the matter of that, he is bonny enow, and young and wealthy, and of an honest stock!"

"Certes," sighed Dick.

"Ay," continued the other; "and, as I doubt not, of good parts and courage; but—but——"

"What, mistress?"

"I will none of him!" said Mistress Alice.

And, as she spoke, she turned away, and quitted the room. Dick stood gazing after her for a moment, and then, with a profound sigh, proceeded to the window, and resumed his avocations.

CHAPTER II.—THE RECESS.

WHEREIN A BEAU OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY IS INTRODUCED TO THE READER'S NOTICE, AND SHEWS, AT HIS FIRST APPEARANCE ON THIS STAGE, HOW COXCMBRY CAN PERVERT AN HONEST HEART.

MASTER JOHN COTTLE, which was the designation of the person who aspired to the hand of Mistress Alice Fitzwarren, and who, as set forth in the preceding chapter, was countenanced in his aspiration by the young lady's father, was eager to avail himself of the advantages which such countenance, when brought to bear on the scruples of a spinster of the dangerous age of twenty-two years, was likely to afford him. Accordingly, on the morning after the subject had been revealed to Mistress Alice, he prepared to urge matters forward with becoming speed.

Master John Cottle, however, was a beau, and as it requires, even on ordinary occasions, some time and skill to decorate the person of one of his order, he was unable to expedite the business with the velocity which he had anticipated. But when he had at length acquitted himself of his onerous toilet; when he had lavished infallible cosmetics on his face, oleose oblations on his head, and fragrant perfumes on his person—when he had done all this, and, with the help of a faithful mirror, which on such occasions he always consulted, satisfied himself of his perfection, the pleasing conviction that he was too exquisite to be rejected by any young lady of taste straightway occurred to him. Whatever were his personal charms—and they were above mediocrity—he certainly spared no pains to render them conspicuous; for in an age in which all classes were so extravagantly attired that an act of parliament was passed to regulate the dresses of the different orders of society, he attracted the notice and admiration of the public by the immoderate costliness of his apparel. His hood was of light-blue silk, figured with gold, and bordered with a chaste gold chain. His hanselines, which were made skin-tight, were of a green colour, and were tied over his yellow hose with links of gold. His crackowes shoes, the peaks of which were of

the utmost length that the act of parliament allowed, were attached to his knees by a chain of silver (for the nobility only were suffered to use gold); and his embroidered jerkin of murrey, collared with fur, and shoulder cloak of cream-coloured cloth, bespoke him the wealthy irresistible of the fourteenth century.

Thus attired, and holding, by the tips of two of his fingers, a gold-headed cane, Master Cottle approached Dame Grammont, who was scouring the steps of her master's door, and accosted her thus :—

“Woman—dame—haw !”

“Haw, says the fool,” muttered Dame Grammont, who had heard only the last word of Master Cottle's salutation.

“The woman's distract,” said Master Cottle ; and in the hope that he might still be able to make her comprehend his meaning, which he thought was palpable to the meanest intellect, he inclined his head to her ear, and repeated, “Haw !”

“Have a care,” bawled the dame, “for ‘a soft answer turns away wrath.’”

Albeit that he was amazed at the incorrigible stupidity of the old woman, who seemed ignorant of the meaning of the commonest phrases, Master Cottle nevertheless resolved to make one further effort to enlighten her understanding. Accordingly, without the slightest wish to give offence, he again bent his head to her ear, and cried, “Haw !”

“Take that for your pains,” vociferated the dame, raising her scrubbing brush, and drawing it ruthlessly over his face. “‘One good turn deserves another.’”

Master Cottle, more terrified at this proceeding than he would have been at a naked rapier, sprang into the middle of the street, down which, though his crackowes shoes were not formed for running, he was meditating a hasty retreat, when Master Fitzwarren, who had witnessed his misadventure from the window, called on him to return. He heard the summons, and as he turned round, and beheld Master Fitzwarren, he expressed his satisfaction by pronouncing the word “Haw !”

“Out on thee !” screamed Dame Grammont, as she descended the steps with the raised scrubbing-brush. “‘A wilful dog——’”

“Stop !” cried Master Fitzwarren, seizing her uplifted arm. “This gentle speaks you well enow. Get you in, you old hag, and improve your manners.”

Though the dame, as she was not yet convinced of the civility of the beau's exclamation, was disposed to continue hostilities, she was withheld by a fear of provoking the further displeasure of her master, and she therefore contented herself with muttering, in answer to the last words of the latter, that “manners made the man ;” and then, taking up her pail and scrubbing-brush, retreated into the house.

"I hope," said Master Fitzwarren, as he grasped the hand of the latter person, "you have chanced on no hurt."

"Haw!" exclaimed the beau, "a little damage and disfigurement to my visage. Howbeit, if you will lead me to a mirror, I can repair my hurts in less than an hour."

"An hour!" cried Master Fitzwarren, who never expended more than a few minutes on his toilet: "will you require so long a time? Well, even so."

And, as he ceased speaking, he led the beau into a chamber which contained the essential article of furniture, and thence, when he had restored his complexion to its original beauty, conducted him to the presence of Mistress Alice. Before, however, the chronicler describes the reception which was vouchsafed to the beau by his mistress, who had hitherto seen him once only, it is necessary that certain circumstances which transpired previous to his arrival be fully detailed.

As Dick Whittington, on the morning in question, was descending from his garret, whither he had retired for a few moments to muse on his prospects, he was led by an involuntary impulse into the chamber in which, on the preceding afternoon, the last deadly blow had been dealt at his hopes of felicity. It was a poor consolation—but it was still consolatory—to go and mark the spot, recall the words, and think over the many heart-stirring hopes and melodious aspirations that were there silenced; and if it were painful—nay, if it cut him to the core, and wrung his writhing heart till it became dead to feeling, it were still nothing more than an antepast of that bitter and venomous draught which he must drink to the bottom. Accordingly, in a mood which rendered him indifferent to consequences, he pushed open the door. He passed on, without looking round to see if there were any inmates, and stopped not till he reached the centre of the chamber.

"This is the spot," he said, aloud—"the exact spot. I marked it too well to mistake; and, God knows, for me to mistake were very sin."

"Why, Dickon," cried a voice behind him, "what is this? Art raving, that thou talkest about marking spots, when no spot is here?"

Dick, as he was thus addressed, turned round to the speaker, who was no other than Mistress Alice; but though a few moments previous he was wishing for an interview with that young lady, in the expectation that she would let fall some particulars concerning her suitor, he was now so embarrassed that he was unable to speak.

"What makes you here, Dick?" asked the young lady. "Why," she continued, "he stares at the floor as though he had lost his wits."

"Wits!" echoed Dick, "I have none to lose, mistress. I think, in sooth, I am beside myself, for I know not wherefore I intruded here."

"And, in sooth," cried Mistress Alice, "here is my father's foot on the stair. By'r Lady, I would not, though I know not why, that he found you here."

Dick stepped towards the door.

"Nay," said Mistress Alice, whose face and neck were overspread with blushes, "there you will run on him. Here," she continued, as she caught him by the arm with her left hand, and pointed to the further end of the room with the other, "hide behind the tapestry."

Dick sprang to the tapestry, which partitioned a recess from the main chamber, and had scarce ensconced himself behind it, and lapped it over as it usually stood, when he heard Master Fitzwarren without.

"Alice," said Master Fitzwarren, "sit you down; for I have matter of moment to discuss with you."

"You will find me a dutiful auditor, sir," replied Mistress Alice, sitting down.

"You remember, of course, what I advised you of yesterday," said her father. "But why do I ask? Every young maid remembers, as your blushes certify you do, aught that relates to her prospects of marriage."

Mistress Alice was silent.

"And yet," resumed Master Fitzwarren, "you seem not to entertain this speculation, which I have set my whole heart on, with the passion it deserves."

"You say you have set your whole heart on it, sir," replied Mistress Alice. "Surely, dear father, you would not that I were really married to Master Cottle?"

"And why not?" demanded the other.

"Oh, sir," returned Mistress Alice, "he is deemed the daintiest beau in the whole city: He is the very perfection of your dandies—the idol of your barbers, and his head their block."

"This jesting is out of place," rejoined Master Fitzwarren. "You know I am no spendthrift of my time, nor am I a coxcomb or a buffoon."

"Wherefore, sir," said Mistress Alice, "I marvel you should commend a coxcomb to me."

"No more of this," returned Master Fitzwarren. "I am your father, mistress—your guardian and guide; and therefore, by your leave, know best whom to commend, and whom to condemn. To be plain with you, too, I have special reasons for your wedding Master Cottle."

"Oh, dear, dear father!" supplicated Mistress Alice, clinging to his arm.

"Peace!" said Master Fitzwarren, with visible emotion. "If

you refuse Master Cottle, who has come in to save us from ruin, we may go beg. Compose yourself, for he will be here in half-an-hour ; and then, Alice, you must remember your duty."

Master Fitzwarren caught up his daughter's hand, and having released his arm from her clasp, and again exhorted her to compose herself, retired from the room. Alice fancied, as he closed the door after him, that she heard the key turned in the lock ; and this security, since it would cut off Dick's retreat, filled her bosom with new fears. She hastened to examine the door, and found that it was indeed locked.

"What will I do?" she exclaimed, wringing her hands.

There was a noise on the stairs, occasioned, as she learned afterwards, by the arrival of Master Cottle. Then she heard her father's voice, then a voice that she thought was Dame Grammont's, and then, after a moment's interval, she heard some one exclaim, "Haw!"

"There's a foreigner among them, mistress," said Dick, who had crept from his covert, and who, being unacquainted with the idiom of beaux, did not know that Master Cottle's interjection was perfectly vernacular.

"Hie you to the recess again," whispered Mistress Alice. "They will be on us straight."

Mistress Alice, however, was mistaken. Nearly half-an-hour, which he spent in decorating his person anew, elapsed before the beau entered. He was accompanied by Master Fitzwarren, who, however, did not remain ; but having introduced her suitor to Mistress Alice, and signalized the latter to remember his injunction, left them together.

The beau, who was of that happy disposition which accords itself to any circumstances, and which has the peculiar quality of making its proprietor feel perfectly felicitous and at home wherever he may be located, unfolded to Mistress Alice the particulars of his encounter with Dame Grammont, which encounter, he said, if any person but himself had been the sufferer, he should have considered a most celestial exhibition. (And here, in parenthesis, it may be observed, that instead of using ordinary adjectives, which he discarded as wanting in expression, it was Master Cottle's custom to qualify his nouns with words which entirely destroyed their sense ; and though he was a faithful son of the catholic church, he preferred swearing by such worn-out deities as Venus and Bacchus to the respectable and comparatively juvenile divinities of the catholic calendar.) Having, however, given a droll account of his adventure with Dame Grammont, who, he said, was the she-dragon that guarded the enchanted castle of Mistress Alice, he entered into a discussion on the several merits of divers articles of haberdashery, inviting particular attention to the harmony and variety of his own attire, and having thus, as he thought, displayed the versatility of his genius, and prepared her heart for the



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Duke and Mistress Alice listening at the Chamber door.

advent of a more sublime discourse, he began a speech which he was in the habit of reciting to every female, young or old, to whom he was disposed to make himself particularly amiable.

"Most adorable princess!" he said, "art thou not content with robbing me of my repose at night, by thrusting thy beauteous form into my bed-chamber, but must thou also, queen of the graces——"

"Oh, sir," said Mistress Alice, "prithee spare me!"

"Spare thee, thou cruel angel!" remonstrated Master Cottle, indignantly, "why should I spare thee, thou obdurate paragon? Hast thou spared me these tedious years that I have been wooing thee?"

"You have but just began your wooing, sir," replied Mistress Alice, "and, in sooth, I wish it was ended."

But Master Cottle was too well acquainted with human nature, as he frequently boasted, to believe anything that was uttered by a woman; and as for the conversion of minutes into years, which was the trifling anachronism that Mistress Alice had found fault with—why, being a lover, he had as much licence in that way as a poet. "No," he thought, "this paragon of truth likes my speech well; but she must needs play on me with her modesty, and gainsay what she would fain avow."

"Angelic vision of enchantment!" he resumed, "I, thy knight-errant, who have carried thy fame into far lands, and conquered at tournaments under the inspiration of thy divinity——I fancied," he said, pausing abruptly, "I heard some one cough."

"Of a surety, sir, you were mistaken," said Mistress Alice, anxiously. "Prithee continue thy speech."

"Haw!" cried Master Cottle, smiling. "You confess, then? You shall have it entire, I promise you; but we will first make certain that we are alone."

"We are, sir, I assure you," stammered Mistress Alice, blushing. "Nay, now, will not you continue your speech?"

"Rest, rest, thou celestial goddess!" said Master Cottle. "I am certain some one coughed behind yonder tapestry. Let me examine it," he added, moving towards the spot where Dick had hidden himself.

"No, you shall not!" cried Mistress Alice, detaining him.

Though exceedingly flattered that Mistress Alice should be so anxious to hear the continuation of his speech, and convinced, by her asseveration to that effect, that there was no other person within hearing, Master Cottle nevertheless persisted in his purpose of examining the tapestry; for he believed that, notwithstanding her playful opposition, Mistress Alice, at heart, wished him to do so. He accordingly broke from her hold, and dashing forwards to the tapestry, drew it hastily aside. Mistress Alice screamed; but straightway, as she cast a hurried glance at the exposed recess, recovered her composure, for she perceived that Dick Whittington was not there.

"Haw!" exclaimed Master Cottle, terrified at the scream of his mistress. "What ails thee, thou potent despot, thou beauty of the Euphrates?"

"Oh, nothing, sir," rejoined the young lady, "nothing at all. I would thank you, though, to continue what you were saying, and it like you."

"Bid me go to Muscovy's cold clime," said the enthusiastic Master Cottle, "or to thy native Indian shores, or wheresoe'er thou listest, so that the emprise be a desperate one."

"And would you do so much for me, sir?" asked Mistress Alice, smiling.

"Dost doubt me?" returned the indignant beau. "Bid me only to bring thee flowers from Paradise."

"Nay," rejoined Mistress Alice, "I will not send thee on so long a journey. Howbeit, to test thy sincerity, I require thee to travel straightway as far as thine own abode, and not to visit me again for three days."

"Haw!" cried the beau, taken aback. "Good, i' faith! Rich, by Venus and Cupid!" And he protested, by all the divinities in the Pantheon, that he would much rather post to her native Indian shores, or, at the least, to Muscovy's cold clime. Mistress Alice, however, persisted, and as he had sworn allegiance, Master Cottle was obliged to obey. He accordingly departed; and on his way down the stairs encountered Master Fitzwarren, who, observing the cloud of discontent that sat on his brow, anxiously inquired how he had fared.

"Haw!" replied Master Cottle, "indifferently well. I have wounded her, I fear."

"Wounded her!" cried Master Fitzwarren. "Where, prithee?"

"In her heart, to be sure," returned the beau.

"Villain!" said Master Fitzwarren, "and dost thou avow it to my face?"

"Nay, nay," replied the beau, "hands off! I spoke by figure, not by letter. In sooth, I have wounded her, but only with words, not steel."

"Pardon a doting father," cried Master Fitzwarren, grasping his hand. "I must be distract.—But farewell, gallant sir!"

"Farewell!" said Master Cottle, who had by this time reached the street-door, "Farewell! adieu! good-bye! ta—ta!" he continued, as he shook Master Fitzwarren's hand, and descended to the street.

Master Fitzwarren gazed after him for a few moments, and then, with a deep sigh, retired into the house. He ascended the staircase, and proceeded to the sitting-chamber, where, as he had expected, he found his daughter. She appeared to be confused by his entrance, and hastily quitting the recess, which, for some moments previous, she had been subjecting to a strict scrutiny, advanced to meet him.

"My darling child!" said Master Fitzwarren, embracing her, "how am I to thank thee for thy dutiful behaviour in this matter?"

"Oh, dear father!" sobbed Mistress Alice.

"Ay, sweetheart," said Master Fitzwarren, leading her to a seat, "thou wilt save thy poor old sire from ruin, and prop his old age with an honest independence."

"How mean you, sir?"

"Why, child," returned Master Fitzwarren, "thou'lt wed this generous man, who is in such a canaries about you, and rescue me from disgrace and a jail?"

"Is it even so, father?" asked Mistress Alice.

"Ay," replied her father. "The old Baron of Arkton, before he died, left in my hands a round sum of monies, which he bade me put to my advantage, paying him usury therefor. I have hitherto paid this usury to the lawful heir of the Baron, one Master Henry Sinclair, a cavalier, who is engaged in the wars. Lately, however, Sir Alfred Sinclair, who has usurped the family honours and estates, discovered the deed which certified my holding thereof, and partly from motives of avarice, and partly in revenge for the protection I afforded his brother, has come upon me for the principal and use from its first lending."

"But this would scarce ruin you, father?"

"No," said Master Fitzwarren. "If my brave argosies were moored beside my wharf, instead of being at the mercy of the seas, 'twould be but a cramp to my speculations; but now, when all my wealth is at hazard, and my bravest argosy—the Unicorn, most likely wrecked, 'twill be my certain ruin."

"How, then, can my marriage assist you?" asked Mistress Alice.

"I have discovered the circumstances to Master Cottle," replied her father, "and he is willing to become a partner in all the ventures I have at sea. To convince him of my integrity, though he questioned it not, I proposed he should have your hand; and if, now that he has agreed, you refuse to accept him, he may haply consider our contract null."

"You speak sooth, dear father," sighed Mistress Alice. "But is the peril so very imminent?"

"Even so," returned Master Fitzwarren.

"'Twere undutiful in me to cry you nay, then," sobbed Mistress Alice. "But, dear—dear father, think how sudden this matter has been opened to me. Think how simple and timorous my poor heart is by nature. Give me a chance of escape, father—one chance!"

"My darling!" exclaimed Master Fitzwarren.

"And, father," continued Mistress Alice, "I will pledge myself, if none of your argosies arrive before four months from this day, to give my hand to the generous Master Cottle; and he, I should think, can ask no more."

"Nor can I," said Master Fitzwarren. "Kiss me, my child!—Thou art my child indeed!"

Alice threw herself into his arms, and wept on his bosom, and as Master Fitzwarren pressed her to his heart, the dignity and calculating pride of the merchant was subdued by the affection of the father. He repented that he had pressed the marriage on her so abruptly, besought her to retract her pledge, from which he would willingly exonerate her, and, though the marriage would rejoice his heart, take time to consider calmly the expedience of so important a step. But Mistress Alice remained firm; and, assuring him that she felt pleasure in anticipating his wishes, retired from the chamber.

Master Fitzwarren paced the room for some time, with his arms crossed behind his back, and his eyes bent on the floor. It grieved him that his daughter's acquiescence to his scheme, though dutifully given, was wrung from her by the difficulties of his own situation, and not rendered from any feeling in favour of Master Cottle, who, though amiable, (which was strange enough) was nothing more than a coxcomb. If he had lived in more modern times, when every hobby developes inconsistent features, Master Fitzwarren would scarce have wondered at a union of coxcombry with amiability, for even among politicians there are instances of such a union; but he lived in a darker age, and he therefore meditated for some time on the paradox which his friend's good and evil qualities seemed to compose. At length, however, he was interrupted by Dame Grammont, who informed him that a cavalier, name and business unknown, desired an audience. Master Fitzwarren directed her to introduce the visitor; and the next moment Sir Alfred Sinclair presented himself.

"Good morrow to your merchantship," he said, as he stepped within the threshold. "How fare your argosies to-day?"

"My Lord Baron," replied the merchant, "I thank you for your question. Howbeit, to speak to your purpose, the monies which you claim shall soon be yours."

"This soon," said Sir Alfred, "is not the phrase of a stable merchant. What specific period doth it imply?"

"The monies shall be counted to you to-morrow," returned Master Fitzwarren:—"now, indeed, if you list."

"How is this?" rejoined Sir Alfred, with evident surprise. "Is this the end, then, of your tale of inconveniences?"

"Ho, ho, my Lord!" said the merchant, "you thought to have me at a push, did you?—Well, you see, I have prepared me."

"This shall not serve me, Fitzwarren," replied Sir Alfred. "Either reveal the present hiding of my brother, or take on thyself the consequence."

"I take the consequence," rejoined the merchant, firmly; "for if I were sworn, of which there is little fear, I know not where your brother now is."

"Well, then," said Sir Alfred, "knowing me to be the Baron of Arkton, and holding monies belonging to me, you have never advertised me thereof. For this dishonesty, be assured, I will have you punished, and—which will be of more consequence to your reputation—exposed."

"That I defy you to," said a third voice.

Both Sir Alfred and Master Fitzwarren, as the last speaker uttered this defiance, turned hastily round, and beheld the Jew mediciner standing on the threshold.

"My good and worthy friend!" exclaimed Master Fitzwarren, extending his hand to the mediciner.

"Thou damned Jew!" cried Sir Alfred, "dost thou again thrust thyself across my path?"

"Sir," said the mediciner, folding his arms across his breast, and bowing his head to his waist, "or, if you like the title better, my Lord, I watched you on your road hither, and knowing Master Fitzwarren's arrangements, I hastened to bring you the monies which you came after. Master Cottle," he continued, turning to the door.

"Haw!" cried a person without.

"Have the monies brought in," said the mediciner.

"Haw!" replied the person outside; and, turning to a porter who accompanied him, continued: "Ascend, you celestial rapscallion, and bear your burthen hitherwards."

Followed by a porter, who bore in his hand two sealed bags, Master Cottle entered the chamber; and, having dropped a gracious nod to the merchant and the mediciner, saluted Sir Alfred with a bow, which he afterwards designated angelic.

"Now," he cried to his porter, when the latter had laid the bags on the table, "take thyself off—retreat—budge—fly!"

The porter, accordingly, departed forthwith.

"Haw!" exclaimed Master Cottle, evidently pleased at the porter's obedience, "a tractable wolf enough, yon fellow."

"You seem disposed, Fitzwarren," said Sir Alfred Sinclair, "to make a mockery of my threats. But beware, beware, Sir Merchant!"

"There are your monies, my Lord Baron," returned the merchant; "I will count them over to you."

Accordingly, breaking the seals of the bags, Master Fitzwarren emptied their contents on the table, and counted it. He then drew out a receipt, which was attested by the mediciner and Master Cottle, and presented it to Sir Alfred for the subscription of his mark.

"Here it is," said Sir Alfred, as he affixed his mark to the receipt, and threw it to Master Fitzwarren. "And now, sir, let my man, who waits below, bear this money away."

He called the person whom he had specified, and Rowland White, who was noticed in the early chapters of this history, an-

swered the summons; and, in compliance with his order, bore away the money. Sir Alfred then rose, and glancing fiercely at the mediciner, turned away from the table.

“Beware!” he said, as he crossed the threshold.

“And beware you!” said the mediciner.

“Haw!” cried Master Cottle. And, when Sir Alfred was out of hearing, he declared that in his opinion that cavalier was no better than a captivating curmudgeon; but then, thanks to our Lady, the mediciner was a droll sage.

CHAPTER III.—THE KISS.

IN WHICH A YOUNG LADY KISSES DICK WHITTINGTON.

DICK, when directed a second time to conceal himself behind the tapestry, began to reflect that, as all hope of retreat seemed to be cut off, the recess might prove a less secure hiding-place than he and Mistress Alice had anticipated. Revolving in his mind the consequences of discovery, and the serious imputation to which such a casualty would expose his mistress, it occurred to him, as it might under similar circumstances to any chivalrous spirit, that if he were willing to run the trifling hazard of a broken neck, which was an inconvenience that no sterling lover would take into consideration, he might yet escape by emerging from the window. The window, or rather, casement, of which he thus proposed to avail himself, looked out on the roof of the kitchen, which was about fourteen feet beneath it. It was divided down the centre, and opened on hinges, so that, fortunately for his purpose, he was able to open it without noise. He took off his coat, and tied the cuff of one of the sleeves round a hinge of the casement; and then, rising softly to the window seat, and pushing himself over, he caught hold of that sleeve of his coat which he had suffered to hang down. Hence, as his feet were little more than four feet from the kitchen roof, he intended to have dropped himself, but the sleeve of his jerkin, which was old and worn, gave way, and he fell unprepared.

Apprehensive that the noise occasioned by his fall would be heard in the kitchen, and that the inmates would thereupon sally forth, he crept along to the end of the building, and thence, without once looking round, sprang into the dust-hole. Before the cloud of dust to which his descent gave rise had dispersed, or the active Dame Williams, whom he heard approaching, arrived to ascertain the origin of the said cloud, he had clambered over the parapet, and reached the garden. Here he found refuge in a

shrubbery, whence, after he had satisfied himself that the coast was clear of spies, he contrived to reach the summit of the garden wall. He then dropped into the street, and having considered a moment what he should do next, and whither he should repair, started for the residence of Master Simon. Leaving him at the lodgings of that worthy citizen, by whose spouse his jerkin was restored to its original entirety, this history will return to Mistress Alice Fitzwarren.

On quitting the presence of her father, and retiring to her own chamber, the firmness that had hitherto supported her gave way, and Mistress Alice, as she mused on the probability of her being wedded to Master Cottle, was so overcome with grief that she wept. She endeavoured to persuade herself, with that incomprehensible hypocrisy that characterizes the infancy of love, that her heart was as yet disengaged, and that her sole objection to Master Cottle was his ridiculous coxcomby. This objection, perhaps correctly, she considered sufficient, and though there was something whispered her that it was not the fundamental one, and she took great pains to convince herself that it was, she did not venture to institute that rigid scrutiny of the heart which the pregnant importance of the subject unquestionably demanded. Perhaps, indeed, she would on reflection have been more venturesome, but all at once, and when she was deep in the speculations specified, some recollection of Dick Whittington intruded itself, and then, naturally enough, she became anxious to ascertain how he had escaped from the recess. Accordingly, composing herself as she best might, she descended to the kitchen, from which, as she approached, sounds issued that were significant of commotion. She quickened her pace, and as she reached the kitchen door, and pushed it open, perceived that Dame Williams and Dick—which latter had returned only a moment previous—were at war.

"How is this, dame?" asked Mistress Alice, angrily. "Fye! fye! that thou shouldst for ever be railing, and at one, too, who is so diligent in his duties."

"Diligent, mistress!" cried the incensed dame. "Why, he's done not a hand's turn here to-day. He's but just come in, forsooth."

"And may not I send him whither I please, then?" demanded Mistress Alice, who saw how the matter stood, and that, however he had escaped, none was aware how Dick had passed the morning. "Peace, woman! he has been doing in my service."

Mistress Alice looked at Dick. Her eyes met his, which were bent vacantly on her face, and though his stare brought a blush to her cheek, and even a cloud of displeasure, he did not avert his gaze. Mistress Alice, confused at his apparent abstraction, turned hastily away, and quitted the kitchen.

Endued with a comprehensive mind, which, even when left to the tuition of nature, is always proud and sensitive, and which he

had improved by every means in his power, Dick could not but entertain a due sense of his degraded situation, and of the hopelessness—the idle folly, of the deep and all-absorbing passion that had wormed its way into the core of his heart. Often, at midnight, when he pressed both his hands on his throbbing forehead, and weighed his head down on his hard pillow—as though, in this wild ecstasy, he would crush the thoughts that perplexed his weary brain—the apparition of his mistress, now wearing a smile and then a frown, now assuming the green sweetness of girlhood and anon the ripe beauty of muliebrity—the apparition of his mistress, thus changing, would rise before his mind's eye, and the maddening thought would strike him, as lightning strikes a vernal tree, that that fair and beautiful being was beyond his aspiration. “Who, then,” he would ask himself, “is to win and wear her?” He longed to see the presumptuous person who aspired to such fruition; and fortune, which favours the bold, threw him in his way.

He had been spending the evening with Master Simon, and, as he returned to his master's house, his thoughts, as usual, turned on Mistress Alice, and he became so abstracted that he walked past his home. It began to rain, and he involuntarily turned for shelter under a dark archway, which opened into a narrow court. He had not been here long, and, with that quick variation of purpose which is characteristic of the lover, was preparing to forsake its shelter, when a second person planted himself at the entrance. Scarcely had the new-comer, who did not observe Dick, thus introduced himself, when a tall man with a plumed bonnet, wearing the short shoulder-cloak of the day, entered the archway, and jostled purposely against him.

“Haw! ahaw!” cried the first comer. “What mean you by this discourtesy, old bullyman?”

“What meanest thou, churl?” replied the other, menacingly.

“Churl, noble knight!” returned the first speaker. “Callest thou me a churl?—I, the pride and delight of the proud and delightful bachelors of the city? I, a churl? Why, sir, I'm a very king. I'm Master John Cottle, sir.”

“Thou'rt a buzzard,” said the other, with a sneer.

“And what art thou?” asked Master Cottle, in a firm tone. “Thou'rt Sir Alfred Sinclair, I trow; and a most heavenly villain to boot.”

“Hound!” cried Sir Alfred, drawing his rapier.

“Hound, am I!” cried Master Cottle. “Haw!” and dashing out into the street, and drawing his rapier, he awaited the onset of Sir Alfred.

Sir Alfred was evidently the best swordsman of the two, and notwithstanding the cool courage of Master Cottle, who had never been known to give way to passion, was getting the advantage, when Dick Whittington, who had been closely watching the com-

bat, struck him on the head with his bat. He fell straightway, and Master Cottle, who was at that moment executing the allonge, passed his rapier within an inch of his side. The clash of the weapons had drawn several of the denizens to the windows of the adjacent houses, and window after window was thrown open, and appeals made by the inmates to the prowess of the watch, but still Master Cottle shewed no disposition to retreat. On the contrary, grasping Dick's arm with his right hand, he gave way to a loud and lengthy burst of laughter, and declared, when he had recovered his breath, that the whole proceeding was most lamentable sport. Dick remonstrated; and begged of him, as a party of the watch were now heard approaching, to make a hasty retreat, but he still remained firm. When, however, the watch were close at hand, and Dick determined to make off alone, Master Cottle suddenly pushed forward, but stopped, every two or three yards, to inflict an energetic rap on the doors of the adjacent houses.

"This will never do," cried Dick, as they reached the end of the street. "You see, sir, the watch have stopped round Sir Alfred, who is only stunned; and when they discover his rank the pursuit will be hot."

"Ahaw!" muttered Master Cottle, musingly. "Give way, then, my heart, and look to thine own safety; for, by cock and pye, I would suffer death or any other punishment rather than miss this grievous fun."

The watchmen were scarcely a hundred yards behind; and as Master Cottle thus delivered himself, and prepared to mount a sign-post which stood before him, and which he benevolently proposed to disencumber of its sign, they started in pursuit. Dick, seeing that he would otherwise be captured, determined to leave Master Cottle to himself, and to provide for his own safety by an instant retreat.

Accordingly, while Master Cottle was climbing the sign-post aforementioned, Dick turned the angle of the street, and pushed forwards. He had not, however, proceeded twenty yards, which brought him to the end of this street, when he discovered that there was no thoroughfare. His first impulse was to turn back, but the cry of the watch, warning him of their immediate vicinity, convinced him that his retreat would be intercepted. The street that he was in was terminated by an iron railing, which inclosed the garden of an adjacent mansion, whose proprietor, as might be inferred from its isolated situation, was most likely a retired merchant or courtier; and Dick, after deliberating for a moment, determined to attempt an escalade.

He had just attained the summit of the railing when his pursuers came in sight. At this critical moment, as a loud halloo assured him that he was discovered, one of the rails caught in his hose, and he was a full minute before he could disengage himself.

This accident elicited another shout from his pursuers, who, when he leaped down into the garden, were only a few yards behind him.

He pushed through a small shrubbery, which was planted immediately within the railing, and entered a broad walk leading to the residence. A large elm-tree grew before the house, and so close thereto that its foliage almost touched one of the casements, which casement, by some unaccountable oversight, the inmates had neglected to shut. Dick detected this circumstance at a glance, and straightway mounting the tree, and creeping along the branch which led in that direction, he entered the open casement. As he closed the casement after him, and cast an anxious look towards the garden railing, he perceived that the watchmen were climbing the rails.

It was so dark that Dick could not discover the character of the apartment into which he had so unceremoniously introduced himself; but as he crept along by the wall, and found by his touch that it was wainscoted with polished wood, he inferred that he was in the bedchamber of some person of consequence. At this moment, while he hesitated how to proceed, the notes of a dulcimer struck on his ear, and a female voice gave utterance to these words :—

“ Bring flowers, ho! from every clime;
 Bring roses, asphodel!
 The bloom that decks them in their prime
 Jane's blushes do excel.
 Bring costly gems from richest mine
 That look like light congeal'd;
 Jane's bosom is a brighter shrine
 Than mines have yet reveal'd.

“ The ruby's heart, whence seems to drip
 Illuminated blood,
 Can scarcely rival Jane's sweet lip,
 Whose kisses light its flood.
 And if the earth have any charms
 With heaven to compare,
 They now repose in Jane's fair arms,
 For heaven, sure, is there.”

The music ceased; and Dick continued groping on, and pausing at every step to listen, till he encountered the handle of a door, which he forthwith opened. He now entered a small closet, which, as he suspected from the dresses that hung around, was occupied by the wardrobe of a lady of rank. As he drew back the door, and placed his ear at the keyhole to listen, he heard footsteps approaching, and while he was deliberating whether he should remain or issue forth, and wishing himself in any but the precise situation that he filled, a lady and her attendant entered the outer chamber.

“ What noise is that in the garden, Mary?” asked the lady.

"I will inquire, Lady Alice," replied the attendant, retiring for that purpose.

Lady Alice de Windsor, by which title Dame Alice Perrers was now known, walked up to a large mirror, which stood at her toilet. Time had made but slight inroads on her lovely person. To say that she was still beautiful would be saying but little; for her clear complexion, her dazzling eyes, her small mouth, her dimpled cheek, her exquisite figure, which had so often inspired the heart of the warrior and the lyre of the poet, were altogether unimpaired, and, though she was now in the forty-sixth year of her age, a stranger, beholding her for the first time, would have supposed that she had but just attained her meridian. Dick, as she walked up to the mirror, pushed open the door of his covert, and when he beheld the outline of her elegant person, which the tight dress then worn exhibited to advantage, he could scarcely repress an exclamation of surprise. He did not, however, commit such an indiscretion, but stole forth from the wardrobe, and glided to the chamber door. He had just reached the door, and was turning the key in the lock, when Lady Alice, who had observed his shadow in the mirror, suddenly turned round. If Dick had at that moment been struck with paralysis he could not have been more still.

There was not a solitary muscle in that lady's face that quivered. The same proud spirit that had subdued a king, that had ruled a nation, that had defied a senate, that had sneered at the threatened axe—the same proud spirit, the same high resolve, the same unbending and inflexible purpose, which no circumstances could alter or relax, swelled in her bosom, and beamed in her eye. She took up a taper from the table, and walking hastily but firmly towards him, held it down to Dick's face, and scrutinized his every feature.

"There is none of the ruffian here," she said, "nor of the thief. Speak, sirrah; what brought you hither?"

"Lady," replied Dick, in an under tone, "dost recollect a certain cavalier of Leaden Hall—one Master Henry?"

A sudden flush spread over the lady's face; her lips trembled, and for a moment her breath seemed suspended.

"Ay," she said, at length; and it appeared as though all the breath that she had arrested were emitted in that word ay.

"I am sought by the watch," continued Dick. "They have beset the house, and if you surrender me I am undone."

"Enough," replied Lady Alice. "Consider thyself safe."

There was a pause, for the noise below had increased, and both Lady Alice and Dick were afraid of being surprised by the servant. At length, after an interval of a few moments, they heard the servant's step on the stair, and placing her white, taper finger on her lovely lips, to signify to Dick that he was to maintain a strict silence, Lady Alice opened the door. She did not, however, sally

forth, but stood on the threshold, holding the door with her left hand.

"Wherefore is this noise?" asked the lady.

"'Tis caused by the watch, my lady," replied the servant. "They aver that a murtherer is hidden in the garden."

"A murtherer!" cried Lady Alice. "No, no, it cannot be; but whether or not, hussey, how dare they intrude here?"

"Lady," replied the servant, "I think, though one Sir Alfred Sinclair, as he bespeaks himself, wills them otherwise, my Lord Walter will persuade them to retire."

"Go, hussey," said Lady Alice; "commend me to my lord, and tell him, as he would do me a devoir, to drive off this rude route. I require you no more to-night."

Lady Alice stepped back, and, nodding an acknowledgment of her servant's humble obeisance, closed her chamber door.

"You have now no time to lose," she said to Dick. She paused, and looked inquiringly in his face, as though, unquestionable as their security might be, the inquiry which she would make could not be spoken. Dick, however, did not comprehend her; but cast down his eyes, and looked confused.

"You understand me not," whispered Lady Alice. "*He is dead, is he?*"

"No, lady," replied Dick, perplexed; "*he lives.*"

"The Jew lied, then?" said Lady Alice. "He lied, did he? I knew it—I knew he lied. 'Twas a cruel, wilful, graceless, damnable lie! But let it pass; I'm wedded now."

"Where would you have me go, lady?" asked Dick, after a moment's pause.

"Aha!" cried Lady Alice, "are they still without? Well, never mind, I will provide thee an outlet. You said, I think, you came from Master Henry?"

"No, lady, I said not so," replied Dick. "I mentioned his name when you first questioned me, because, some years ago, you sent me on a mission to him."

"Ah!" said Lady Alice. "You are the boy, then, from whom the mediciner obtained my ring, and who betrayed to him my errand?"

"I betrayed you not, lady," replied Dick.

"But he wormed it from you, though," returned Lady Alice. "Nay, no apologies, for you have little time to spare. This way, sir."

Lady Alice opened the chamber door, and then stepped hastily back; for Lord Walter de Windsor, her husband, stood on the threshold.

"You look amazed, sir," she said to him. "Does this young gallant, in his old and tattered jerkin, look like a favoured lover of your wife?"

"Your pardon, Lady Alice," replied Lord Walter de Windsor.

"His abrupt appearance, as you must own, was like to amaze a husband."

"True, my lord," returned Lady Alice. "But he is the person whom the watch are in quest of, and no lover. How he came here I know not, nor do I reckon. But see him safe forth, my lord; for he is a friend of the Jew mediciner, and I would be chanced on no harm."

Lord Walter bowed; and bidding Dick follow him, descended to the street-door, which opened on the other side of the house to that by which Dick had entered.

As soon as Dick reached the street he bent his steps towards Cornhill. The clock of St. Michael, Cornhill, as he attained the entrance of the church-yard, chimed the quarter past midnight; and this abrupt and sententious breach of the solemn stillness, and a reluctance, to which few of his contemporaries were proof, to intrude at that hour on the resting-place of the dead, awakened feelings that he was unable to repress. At this moment the moon burst from a dense black cloud, by which, for several hours previous, it had been completely obscured. There was an old tradition, that he was well acquainted with, connected with St. Michael's church, and as he entered the church-yard it flashed across his mind. Two men, it was said, were sitting, one midnight, in the belfry, where they had been sent to toll the knell for a departing soul, when, instead of performing this solemn duty, they resolved to amuse themselves with dice. They had not, however, been engaged thus many minutes, during which both of them uttered divers blasphemous oaths and imprecations, before they quarrelled, when, as they threw down the dice, and stood up to fight, the devil flew in between them. He made a grasp at one of them, but as both the men crossed themselves, and called aloud on the patron saint of the church, who was naturally offended at the devil's officious interference, his claws only caught the stone wall of the belfry, in which wall, even so late as the sixteenth century, Stow says that he saw their impressure!

Dick cast a timorous look at the towering belfry. It had just caught the silver light of the moon, and the old black tower, whose venerable top was blackened with the smoke of the surrounding city, looked pale and hoary. The roof of the church, and the body and buttresses, were still in deep shade, and threw a dark shadow over the adjacent ground; and this disposition of the moonlight, at all times solemn, imparted an unearthly aspect to the silver-tipped tombstones, which, as their white crests plumed themselves with the moon's rays, looked like so many grisly spectres. He fancied, as he reached the centre of the church-yard, that he heard a rustling noise, and he stopped abruptly.

Dick's heart was as bold and nervous as that of a lion. He was still, however, open to the ideal terrors which, when they once gain headway, relax the nerves of the strongest mind. Never-



Dick's consternation in the Churchyard of St. Michael, Cornhill.

theless, if the first shock palsied^d his heart—if fear straightened his hair, and forced the cold sweat in huge drops through his brow—he was the next moment fired with desperate and unnatural resolution. He did not murmur a prayer—he did not even breathe, but stared, with his eyes starting from his sockets, at one of the buttresses of the church. After standing thus for a full minute, and, notwithstanding that he had drawn in the muscles of his ears, that he might catch the slightest sound, being still unable to distinguish any object, he sprang to the spot that he had so closely scrutinized.

“Who art thou?” said a voice, which Dick knew well.

“What, Master Simon!” cried Dick, “and you, too, Sir Mediciner! Why, gentles, what brings you hither?”

“What brings you?” asked the mediciner and Master Simon together.

“Just this,” rejoined Dick; and he related, without reserve, how he had passed the night.

“And we,” said the mediciner, when Dick had finished his narration, “have been waiting this hour past for one who promised to meet us here. Howbeit, as I think he will scarce venture here now, we will tarry no longer.”

Accordingly, quitting the umbrage of the buttress, they moved on out of the churchyard.

“I know not where I can lodge me to-night,” observed Dick, as they passed up Leadenhall-street, “since by this hour my master’s people must have sought their chambers.”

“Even so,” replied the mediciner; “and therefore, my son, thou must home with me.”

Dick agreed, and they pushed on to Aldgate, which was now closed. Master Simon, however, was acquainted with the warder, and, at his request, that functionary suffered Dick and the mediciner to pass through.

Miriam was anxiously awaiting her father’s coming, and when, on admitting him, she perceived that he was accompanied by Dick, whom she had not seen for several days, her dark eyes sparkled with delight. Her father, however, desired her to retire, which she did straightway.

“You must make the best of these cushions, my son,” said the mediciner, “and cover yourself over with these cloaks. There be worse beds.”

“I have a worse every night, father,” replied Dick.

“’Tis clear to me,” said the mediciner, musing, “this Sir Alfred Sinclair dogged Master Cottle to-night, thinking to have him at advantage. He is very revengeful, and unscrupulous withal, and will, I am advised, persecute me to the utmost; but this shall never deter me from doing right.”

“I think not,” said Dick.

“And in the morning,” resumed the mediciner, “if he dare to

pursue this matter further, I will shew him as much." And as he ceased speaking, he quitted the room ; and Dick disposed himself for sleep.

He slept soundly ; and the twilight of a February morning, which called the dark-eyed Miriam from her couch, had no effect on his sealed eyelids. Miriam, on entering the chamber, found him still asleep ; and she stole on tip-toe to where he lay. Every nerve in her body trembled, and the blood forsook her cheek and lips, as, drawing down the cloak that covered his head, she peered into his vacant face. That face which, when the spirit was awake, was wont to beam with expression, was now without a line of thought—so near is sleep to death. She bent her head over him. Her breath, though she endeavoured to restrain it, escaped on to his forehead, and her lips almost absorbed it again. Surely, it could not be sin to look at that white forehead, or to breathe on it, or even to kiss it—and she kissed it accordingly.

Dick instantly awoke ; but unconscious of the favour that had been impressed on his forehead, thought only that Miriam had come to waken him.

"Good morrow, fair mistress," he said ; "and thank you for your care."

Miriam, as he sprang to his feet, gave him her hand, and he raised it to his lips, and kissed it.

CHAPTER IV.—THE SHRIFT.

MISTRESS CLARISSA MEETS AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE, IN WHOSE COMPANY, AS OF YORE, SHE ENCOUNTERS MISHAP.

WOMAN'S love, generally, is as unchanging as heaven ; for though cynics may abuse, and pseudo-philosophers libel her, constancy is as natural in woman as light in the sun. Yet are there some women, as there are many men, whose dispositions are too selfish to receive the soft impressure of passion ; and they sink in their unhallowed graves without severing one tie save that of mortality. It was far otherwise, however, with Clarissa Haywood. Reared in a convent, where she had availed herself of every opportunity of acquiring knowledge, her gentle spirit had been refined by education ; and when her feelings had attained their full strength, and had burst forth from the recesses to which they had originally been confined, they united in one limpid and vigorous stream, which poured its sweeping tide over her youthful heart. Master Henry was her mind's sun ; and her tender recollections of him were flowers which that sun had endued with vitality. She had no thought, no hope, no element, but love ; and but for the robustness of her constitution, which neither peril nor privation affected, the difficulties in which this resistless passion was continually entangling her must soon have torn her heart in twain.

For more than seven tedious years she had been content to forego all pleasure save that which she derived from her attendance on Master Henry. She had cheerfully undergone peril, had attended him in the several sallies of the garrison, had watched over him when he slept, and sang merry lays to him when her own heart was sad. And yet, all this time, she knew that he loved another, and that she had no prospect in life but one scene of misery.

One day, as she was waiting on Master Henry in his chamber,

Hubert Cromwell introduced himself, and asked the cavalier if he wished to purchase a hawk.

"There is a falconer without, sir," he said, "who has a couple to sell."

"Bring him and his birds hither, good Hubert," said Master Henry.

Hubert retired, and a moment afterwards returned, followed by a gaunt man in the habit of a falconer.

"A million of good morrows to your worship," said the falconer, bowing to Master Henry. "Here are your thorough falcons, your worship," he continued, as he held out his right arm, to which two hawks were secured by a silken leash—"who, I will warrant you, have never had the frounce, and, with proper care, never will have it. These be none of your sparrow-hawks, sir, or your buzzards, but, what are rare enow, your downright gos-hawks."

"They are fine birds, i'faith," returned Master Henry. "What think you, Hal?" he added, turning to Clarissa.

Clarissa blushed, and turned her head the other way. "They are very fine birds, sir," she faltered.

"I believe you, young master," observed the gaunt falconer, who had been subjecting Clarissa's face to a close scrutiny; "and, d'ye see, sir, they sport their own feathers. There's no borrowed plumage here, I trow."

"No," said Clarissa, turning pale, "there is none indeed, for they need no disguise. But the poor sparrow, when pressed to death, might find safety in the cast-off feathers of the hawk."

"To be sure," observed the falconer, "to be sure, sir; and I'm not the fowler to snare a hunted bird.—But will you buy, sir?" he asked of Master Henry. "Will you make purchases? Will you deal for my commodities?"

"I have no one to 'tend them," said Master Henry, "till I reach England, whither, I think, I will shortly be going."

"Well, your worship," returned the falconer, "I will 'tend them. I will be your falconer, your servitor, your bird-keeper, your master of the aviary. I am for home, your worship; for merry old England, as Dr. Catchpenny says. You shall have the birds for three pieces, your worship."

"And you will have a care of them?"

"Even so, your worship."

The birds were purchased; and Hubert Cromwell was directed to assign the falconer a fitting lodging. Being certain that the falconer, who was no other than our old friend of the Tower Royal, had recognised her, and anxious to learn whether he intended to divulge her secret, Clarissa obtained leave of absence from Master Henry, and sallied out in quest of him. She encountered him at the door of Master Henry's lodging, and, having whispered him to follow her, she led the way into the town.

She passed out of the citadel, followed at a short distance by the falconer, and entered a long, narrow, dirty street, which led to the other end of the town. Hence they passed into a by-street, where the houses, of which the upper floors projected over the causeway, were so close, that if they were so minded the inmates of opposite attics might shake hands across the street. Here they entered an hostel, which was dignified by the sign of the *John de Vienne*, and were led into a back room by the proprietor, who, though a surly, crabbed-looking Frenchman, saluted them civilly in English.

"Time has worn furrows in your cheek," said the falconer to Clarissa, when, on the retreat of the landlord, they were left together in a low, dark room—"and dimmed the brightness of your eye; but I could never forget your features."

"You do remember me, then?" faltered Clarissa.

"Remember thee!" exclaimed the falconer. "Dost think I forget that awful night—that night which nearly turned the tables of fate, and almost proved the learned Dr. Catchpenny a visionary?"

"If I remember truly," said Clarissa, "you told me that night of a certain prediction?"

"Ay, ay," sighed the falconer; "and though, to be sure, 'twas comfortable enough for the nonce, 'tis a heavy load on my mind just now." And the falconer groaned.

"How did you escape drowning?" asked Clarissa.

"Why," rejoined the falconer, "as fate would have it, though every one else was to be drowned, I was to be reserved for the hangman; and so, when the galliot broke up, I was helped to a stout beam, which bore me safe ashore. I was weary enow, but when I found myself on the strand, I bethought me that I might have a shorter life than I had expected; for though the English held possession of Calais, morning would bring down to the beach a lot of French fishers, and they might hang me forthwith. So, divining from the marshy soil that I was near to Calais, I started straightway, and as fate would have it, reached it in safety. Since then, I have wandered about, sometimes with the army, and sometimes visiting the garrison here.—But how did you escape?"

Clarissa replied by relating the perils which she had undergone.

"Poor lass!" said the falconer, "thou knowest not whither thy vagary of sporting men's apparel would lead thee. Now, I know somewhat of thy history, and swear to keep good faith; thou mayst advertise me wherefore thou gainsayest thy sex."

"Wouldst thou, good falconer, torture a broken heart?"

"Me?" said the falconer. "By cock and pye, now, thou dost me egregious wrong! I would rather, in sooth, the learned Doctor Catchpenny claimed me to-morrow—nay, this very minute, than I would hurt thee, poor wench!"

"Then," replied Clarissa, "I would trust thee; but oh, sir!

the secret is the only rivet that holds my broken heart together, and were I once to loosen it, though with never so tender a hand, I were lost for ever."

"Humph!" cried the falconer, "I might guess near the mark from the breadth of thy speech, because, about seven years ago, I had a fellow to your rivet (as you call it) hammered round my own heart. A gentle cook—forgive my sigh—was in a canaries about me, and shewed me gracious favour. If I dare avow it, in sooth, 'tis the remembrance of her exquisite skill in cookery, and a disgust of the frogs and soups of these chattering Frenchmen, that seduces me back to happy England."

"*Diable!*" muttered a third voice.

"Who spoke?" demanded Clarissa and the falconer together.

They examined the room, which, as the twilight had commenced, was now very dark, but they could see no one.

"We have been beguiled by overwrought fancy," said the falconer, as he resumed his seat, and drank off a goblet of wine. "This same wine," he added, "though small enow, is the mother of fancy, wherefore I have ever made her a mother to me."

"Hold!" whispered Clarissa. "Hast thou ever heard how these Frenchmen, when they can do it safely, waylay and murder stragglers from the garrison?"

"Ay," replied the falconer.

"And didst not note how our host welcomed us in English?" asked Clarissa. "My word for it, brave sir, he has been listening to our converse. That noise we heard was not a trick of fancy."

The falconer elevated his brows, and looked grave.

"Be ready with thy rapier," said Clarissa. "I will try the door."

Accordingly, as the falconer drew forth his rapier, Clarissa crossed on tip-toe to the door, and cautiously lifted the latch. The door, however, was locked on the outside.

"As I expected," she whispered.

The falconer shook his head, and then, looking steadfastly in her face, caught up Clarissa's hand, and pressed it in his own.

"If they hang me not," he whispered, thinking that his gaolers could not conveniently raise a gibbet, "there is stout hope."

"Try the chimney," said Clarissa.

The chimney was capacious, having been constructed, as were most hostelry chimneys, to hold two seats within its range, and could be converted into a more pleasant thoroughfare than builders of modern chimneys would suppose.

"Thou hadst best ascend first," said the falconer; "and I will stand sentry below."

Clarissa nodded assent. They heard the sound of voices, articulating with the vehemence peculiar, not exactly to Frenchmen, but to the people of the continent, in the adjoining room; but though both of them placed their ears to the wall, and listened

with suppressed breath, they could not distinguish a word that was uttered. Clarissa raised her small feet to the grate, and with the help of the falconer, whose altitude enabled him to reach much higher than she, ascended several feet up the chimney. At this moment, however, a mass of soot, which her raised hand had loosened, fell on to her head, and almost smothered her. She was, consequently, obliged to descend, and as she reached the floor, and shook the dust from her face and cap, she heard the door of the apartment unlocked.

The voices in the next room were still audible, and the landlord, who now presented himself, had entered to reconnoitre. But Clarissa, on hearing the key turned without, had stolen behind the door; and when it was opened, and the landlord had entered, she slammed it to. The falconer, at the same moment, drew his rapier, and seized the landlord by the collar. He opened his mouth, as though he were about to call for assistance; but the falconer, placing the point of his rapier close to his breast, whispered him that the slightest exclamation would cost him his life.

“Now then!” said Clarissa, in an under tone, “we must imprison his tongue.”

She drew off a sash which was wound round her waist, and, having trebled its folds, tied it over the mouth of the trembling Frenchman, and effectually gagged him. The falconer wore a similar sash, which he bade her take off, and with this Clarissa bound the Frenchman's hands and feet, and then, having divested him of that symbol of his vocation, secured him with his own apron to the massive table.

The persons whom they heard conversing in the next room, and who were awaiting the return of the landlord, had now, as was evident from the increased vehemence of their articulation, become impatient; and therefore both Clarissa and the falconer, as they were not aware of the strength or position of their adversaries, thought that the chimney would afford a safer outlet than the door. This last, accordingly, Clarissa locked; and, cautiously withdrawing it from the lock, placed the key within her vest.

“Use dispatch,” whispered the falconer; “for the foe will be on us straight.”

Clarissa stepped on to the grate; and assisted by the falconer, who raised her in his arms, ascended several steps up the chimney. The chimney became more narrow as she proceeded, but though it was not originally designed for a thoroughfare, and therefore sufficiently incommodious, the artists who had been in the habit of cleansing it had made several steps in the sides; and by the help of these steps Clarissa contrived to ascend. She was closely followed by the falconer, who, whenever she needed such assistance, held up her feet with his brawny hands. In this manner

they proceeded till, about half-way up, they paused where the chimney of the next house joined that which they were ascending.

A loud noise, like the forcing of a door, which assured them that the situation of the landlord would soon be discovered by his friends, now alarmed them; and as they had no doubt but that steps would be taken to intercept their retreat, and that, therefore, escape from the roof would be impracticable, they resolved to descend the other chimney. Accordingly, having satisfied themselves that there was no fire in the grate below, they crept over the partition, and commenced the descent. Clarissa's foot, however, slipped; and had not the falconer, who had just bent over her to peer down the chimney, caught her by the collar of the jacket, she would probably have broken her neck. This accident made her more cautious, and as the falconer, who had perhaps entered and departed from other houses by a similar road, was very expert in his movements, and ready at need to second her exertions, she at length reached the bottom in safety.

It happened that the apartment to which they descended was tenanted by a buxom widow, who, being a good catholic, was at this precise moment confessing her sins to a jovial priest. Instead, however, of being on her own knees, she had adopted the more comfortable form of sitting on the knee of the priest, who protested that, though novel, this was quite as agreeable to the church as the other and primitive custom. So intent was the widow on clearing accounts with the church, and so eager was the church to exact payment for and calculate the several items, that though Clarissa and the falconer had not descended the chimney without noise, neither penitent nor priest had heard anything to awaken apprehension; but when, as he was imprinting the kiss of absolution on the widow's lips, the priest espied the sooty legs of Clarissa dangling from the chimney, which the corner of his eye had just included in its prospect, he relaxed the caress which he had thrown round the widow's neck, and, under the impression that the intruder was no less a person than the fiend king himself, trembled in every joint.

"What ails thee, good father?" demanded the widow, as she observed this sudden alteration in the priest's demeanour.

The priest could not speak—he could not even move. His eyes were fixed on the mouth of the chimney, whence, as she followed the direction of his eyes, the widow perceived two sooty figures protruding themselves. Instantly reciprocating his terror, and not doubting but that the intruders were agents of the devil, the widow clung more closely to the priest, whose gown, she believed, would protect both her and himself from satanic assaults.

"*Sancte Johannes Baptista!*" stammered the priest, at length, as he endeavoured to release himself from the widow's desperate embrace.



The mysterious appearance in the French Widow's chimney.



Neither Clarissa nor the falconer, both of whom had now gained the floor of the chamber, could forbear laughing at the consternation of the lovers; and these latter, palsied and conscience-stricken, imputed their mirth to demoniacal exultation. The sooty fugitives, however, soon relieved them of their terrors by making for the door. This, as she had no mind to be interrupted, the cautious widow had previously locked, and Clarissa, having extracted the key, and retreated to the exterior with the falconer, locked it on the outside. They then descended the stairs, whence, without interruption, they groped their way along a dark passage, which led them to the street-door. They hastily lifted the latch, and, as they perceived that the street was clear, passed out, and halted not till they had reached the citadel.

CHAPTER V.—THE ARREST.

IN WHICH ONE OF DICK'S FRIENDS IS COMMITTED TO DURANCE ;
AND ANOTHER, OF WHOM HE WAS ONE OF THE GUARDIANS,
DISAPPEARS.

ON the evening of the day on which Miriam had kissed Dick's forehead, so soon as he could emancipate himself from the dominion of Dame Williams, Dick again visited the mediciner. He was admitted by Miriam, who forthwith led him to the upper chamber, in which, though that person seemed to be unconscious of his vicinity, he encountered the mediciner. Dick perceived that he was in a brown study, and therefore he did not intrude any salutation, but, taking up a tome which lay on the table, sat down by the door.

"Dick," said the mediciner, suddenly starting up, "you were before the mayor to-day?"

"Ay, father," replied Dick ; "and marvelled much I saw not you. I was an evidence, you know, for Master Cottle, who was last night captured by the watch."

"That I know," replied the mediciner. "How fared you?"

"Sir Alfred Sinclair came not to the court," answered Dick ; "and so the warrant was cancelled."

"I marvel the knight was not there," muttered the Jew.

"'Twas certified in court," said Dick, "that he had gone to lay information against a practiser of art magic ; but the mayor, having heard my testimony, said Master Cottle stood acquitted ; therefore he would detain him no longer."

"And so the matter ended?"

"Even so, father."

At this moment there was a loud knocking at the street-door.

"Who is this knocks in such haste," asked the mediciner.

Miriam hastened to the door, and before Dick, who rose to follow her, had reached the top of the stairs, admitted a veiled lady, whom she straightway led to the upper chamber. Dick, fearful of intruding, was meditating a retreat, but the lady, apparently anti-

icipating his purpose, beckoned him back. She then drew off her veil, and disclosed the features of Lady Alice de Windsor.

"I dare to say," she began, as the mediciner, who had risen from his seat on her entrance, crossed his arms over his breast, and bent his head forward.—"I dare to say, Sir Mediciner, you disremember this pallid face?"

"Lady, no," replied the Jew.

"Oh, do not you forget?" asked Lady Alice, bitterly. "You know me, then, for Alice Perrers?"

"I know you, gracious lady, for Alice de Windsor," said the other.

"Ay; and who made me de Windsor?" demanded Lady Alice. "Who told me the vile lie that, if thou wert a Christian, would irretrievably damn thee, and being, as thou art, a dog of a Jew, and therefore damned already, will heap on thee punishment manifold?"

A bright flush spread over the Jew's cheeks; but it instantly vanished, and he spoke not a word.

"Man of cunning," said Lady Alice, "thou hast overreached thyself. Thou, a deviser of policies, a crafty and heartless Jew, who hast mystery on thy lips, and deceit in thy heart, shalt see thy grand schemes laid there, where I have trodden princes. I have served thee—oft and oft; and thou, in requital, hast told me lies—perjured thyself, blasted thy name, and destroyed my peace."

Lady Alice sank down on a cushion; and drawing a kerchief from her vest, and raising it with both her hands to her eyes, burst into tears.

There was a pause of several minutes. Except Lady Alice, whose sobs broke the silence, scarce one of the party ventured to breathe. The mediciner, however, was watching for a favourable moment to speak. He well knew, from long experience of her temper, that if left to itself the passion of Lady Alice would soon subside, but if opposed, either by deprecation or contradiction, it would become more violent. He restrained himself, therefore, till Lady Alice again addressed him.

"Wherefore, Sir Jew," she said, at length, "didst thou palm so cruel a deceit on one who trusted thee? Can no tie secure thy faith to a Christian?"

"Lady," replied the Jew, bowing his head to his breast, "dost thou recollect a certain cavalier, hight Henry Sinclair, who served with the Black Prince? I know thou dost; and wouldst tell me, as of this other one, that thou didst love him?"

"Never," said Lady Alice de Windsor. "He, of all the court, was the only one that paid me no homage; and as he was the bonniest of all, and among the bravest, I desired more to be admired by him than by all the others. I flattered him, I smiled on him; and I confess, when he was proof to these temptations, I felt a woman's pique, and was more anxious for the reduction of his

virtue than I ought to have been. Howbeit, he was invincible; and as thou knowest, and my conscience now tells me, I cruelly revenged myself."

"And was it meet, Lady, that the son of this cavalier should ever love thee?"

"His son, sir?"

"Ay, lady," said the Jew, "his son, The young cavalier of Leaden Hall is the son of Sir Henry Sinclair."

Lady Alice seized Miriam's arm, and bent her head over her shoulder. It was then that, like an electric shock, truth darted through her mind; it was then that the retrospect of her life, divested of the sunshine and poetry of vice, rose, like night without a star, before her mind's eye; and it was then—in that moment of blighted hope, of palsied energy, and pregnant sensibility, that the better feelings of her heart, rising from the depths in which they had slept, awakened a spirit of compunction.

"I have sinned—I have sinned," she murmured, after a pause; "and He hath punished me less severely than I deserved."

She fell, like a dead weight, on the breast of Miriam, who reeled beneath her burthen. The mediciner and Dick, both of whom were touched by her pathetic remorse, rushed to her assistance, and raised her apparently lifeless form from Miriam's arms. She had swooned, but, though Dick thought her condition past hope, the Jew's skill speedily restored her.

"Let me go, now," she said, as she recovered her consciousness. "I thank thee, O God!" she continued, rising from the cushion on which she had been seated, "for that Thou hast broken a proud heart, not to fill it with despair, but to turn it on hope and Thee."

She kissed Miriam's cheek, which was wet with tears; and then, turning round, grasped the mediciner's hand.

"Permit me to follow thee home, fair lady," said the Jew.

"I inhibit all attendance," replied Lady Alice. "Farewell—for ever!"

The Jew still detained her hand. "The God of persecuted Israel," he exclaimed, as a big tear rolled slowly down his cheek, "pardon thee, noble lady! for if thou hast strayed, as we all have, thou hast yet done great good. May He give thee grace!—may He bless thee—the loveliest of his creatures!"

Lady Alice hastily withdrew her hand from the clutch of the Jew, and, rushing from the chamber, descended the stairs to the street-door. Miriam, owing to the excited state of her feelings, was some moments before she could open the door; but Lady Alice did not once look in her face, or speak a single word, but when the door was at last opened, darted into the street.

Dick, on Miriam's return, rose to depart. He had intended, previous to visiting the Jew, to call at the residence of Master Simon; but the scene which he had just witnessed induced a dis-

inclination for society, and he returned forthwith to the domicile of his master.

A few days afterwards, as he was working in the garden, Dick was encountered by Mistress Alice Fitzwarren and Master Cottle.

"Ahaw!" cried Master Cottle. "I owe you recompence, my young bachelor."

"You mistake, your worship," replied Dick, "you owe me nothing."

"Haw! but I do," replied Master Cottle. "You were my evidence, the other day, before the mayor; and you have done me good service besides."

"How, sir?" asked Mistress Alice, eagerly.

"He saved my life the other night," replied Master Cottle. And he thereupon related the particulars of his rencontre with Sir Alfred Sinclair.

"Here," he continued, as he held out a moidore to Dick, "is earnest for thee. I am soon to be a partner in Master Fitzwarren's business; and then, my young gallant, I will do something for you that will improve your condition."

Dick coloured to the brow. "I thank your worship," he said, with a low obeisance, "but I cannot accept your gratuity. Nevertheless, I feel grateful for your kind notice."

He looked at Mistress Alice, whose eyes, he thought, were dimmed with tears; but she instantly averted her head.

That evening Dick paid a visit to the lodgings of Master Simon Racket. The latter, however, was from home, and Dick proceeded to the house of the mediciner.

"Hast heard of the strange advices which have reached the city?" asked the mediciner, as Dick entered the chamber.

"No, father," replied Dick. "What do they import?"

"Rebellion," said the mediciner. "This new impost—the poll-tax—hath created general discontent, and I will not marvel if a great commotion ensue."

"God defend the king and his rights!" muttered Dick.

"I cry Amen," said the mediciner; "and certes, as they have no leader, the serfs are like to come off second-best. Only for this parson Ball—a fellow who asserts that all men should be equal, and that there should be neither kings nor peers—rebellion would not dare to raise its head!"

Here a loud knocking at the outer door startled the inmates of the mediciner's house. Miriam hastened to the door; and the next moment Master Simon Racket rushed into the chamber. He had evidently run thither at his full speed. His respiration was sententious; the perspiration streamed down his face; and his whole appearance bespoke him the bearer of important tidings.

"Fly!" he cried to the mediciner. "Fly for your life!"

"Breathe well, Simon," said the Jew, firmly; "and then thou'lt be able to deliver thine advices freely."

"There is not time to breathe," cried Master Simon, in broken accents. "If you love life, if you love her—Miriam—fly straight!"

"Oh! my father!" screamed Miriam, throwing herself on the mediciner's bosom.

"Be sure," cried Dick, "Master Simon speaks on advice. Fly, father, fly!"

"Sir Alfred Sinclair will be here immediately," pursued Master Simon, recovering his breath. "He brings an officer to attach you for sorcery. Leave Miriam to my charge, and fly for your very life."

"I'll not leave my dear father," sobbed Miriam. "I never left him yet; I never will leave him."

"Simon," said the mediciner, as he gently raised Miriam from his breast, and placed her on a cushion beside him, "you speak of flight as if 'twere practicable. There is no hope of escape; and therefore I will wait my caption here."

"Do not, do not, dearest father," implored Miriam. "Try to escape, I beseech you."

"Shame, father!" cried Dick. "Is this the way you would meet disaster? Fly, sir; fly straight; and I will 'company you."

"Come, then, my son," said the mediciner; "we will away."

"Oh! father! father!" sobbed Miriam, "must we part thus? God of Abraham! hast thou, too, leagued with the Gentile?"

"Darest thou to question the Highest?" said her father, sternly.—"But I commend you to Him, my daughter," he added, in a kind tone. "May He guard you, my sweet child!"

"Come, come, father," urged Master Simon, in a broken voice. "Leave Miriam to me."

"I go, my son," said the mediciner, embracing him.

He sprang down the stairs, followed close by Dick, and hastened to the door. He dashed through the door; and as the night had now set in, and it was very dark, did not observe four men who stood outside. Scarcely, however, had he crossed the threshold, beside which they stood, when two of them grasped his collar.

"In the name of the holy father," said one of his assailants, "and by the authority of God and the king, I arrest thee for sorcery."

"Thou shouldst have put God first, my master," said the mediciner, "the king second, and the pope last."

"Heed not his blasphemy," cried Sir Alfred Sinclair, who now stepped forwards; "but bear him whither your warrant directs."

"Oh, stop! stop!" screamed Miriam, who, with Master Simon, at this moment reached the door. "Stop, sirs! for the sake of Him whom you worship—the lowly Nazarene! Oh, sir!" she added, throwing herself at the feet of Sir Alfred Sinclair, and clasping his legs with her trembling hands—"have mercy as you will one day ask it! Spare us, sir! spare us, I beseech you!"

"Rise, maiden!" said Sir Alfred. "I have no power to stay thy sire's arrest."

"The curse of the persecuted be on you, then!" cried Miriam. "The curse of the broken-hearted, that never yet was crossed—the curse of the motherless, that reaches beyond the grave—the curse of the orphan, that would paralyze an angel, bear you to utter darkness."

"Away, sirs," shouted Sir Alfred; and, bursting from Miriam's grasp, he sprang after the men who had the custody of the mediciner.

"My father! oh, my father!" screamed Miriam; and fell back into the arms of Dick.

Dick and Master Simon carried her into the house, and bore her to the upper chamber. They consoled her, as well as they could, under the severe bereavement which she had sustained; and Master Simon, as much to Dick's edification as his surprise, poured into her ear that sweet and never-failing consolation which can be found in the Book of Life only.

"'Tis not a moment for me to dissent, good Master Simon," sobbed Miriam; "but, oh! how can we think but hardly of your faith, which you now paint so fair, when the worshippers of this same Jesus persecute us so sorely."

"Yet He," said Master Simon, scarcely able to restrain the emotion which the remembrance of his Divine Master's sufferings, as well as the distress of Miriam, called into play—"He, my dear Miriam, shed precious blood for us all—Jew and Gentile, Christian and Pagan. He told us to do good to our enemies—God forgive us!—and not to crucify those who were crucified sufficient in wanting his healing word. So, cheer up, my sweet maiden! I will be a father to you. Come to my hearth. And for thy father"—here Master Simon's broken speech evinced how deeply he was affected—"we may yet be able to rescue him; for, as Dick often says, 'perseverance accomplisheth many things.'"

"You are very good," said Miriam, "and so is Dick—very, very good. But I will not leave this house, Master Simon. I will not desert the roof of my father."

Both her friends endeavoured to persuade her to accept the hospitality which Master Simon had proffered, but in vain; and therefore, when they saw that her spirits had become more composed, and had assured her fortitude by all the consolation which the religion of either afforded, they took their leave. They continued to call on her every evening, to support her in her affliction, and to bring her intelligence of her father, whose trial, they discovered, was fixed for the 16th of June. Lady Alice de Windsor, to whom Miriam had made known his situation, as well as her husband, Lord Walter, exerted all their influence to obtain the mediciner's liberation; but it was evident, notwithstanding that the Duke of Lancaster entertained a strong predilection in his

favour, that the Romish clergy had marked him for their victim, and that, though the evidence likely to be adduced against him was frivolous in the extreme, he would in all probability be condemned to the stake. As, however, his great abilities, natural and acquired, were well known to the bigoted hierarchy, and they were anxious to achieve the conversion of so learned a person, an offer of pardon was held out to him provided he would embrace the Romish creed. Whether he accepted this offer, or, despite the natural desire for life and unwillingness to leave his child unprotected, rejected it, these chronicles will in due time make manifest.

In the meantime Sir Alfred Sinclair conceived a design by which he proposed to complete the mediciner's ruin. He had seen Miriam on the night of her father's arrest; and having been struck with the grace and beauty of her person, and being aware that she was now the only inmate of the house, he determined to carry her off. Accordingly, about a month after his last visit to that locality, he set out for Aldgate, bent on Miriam's abduction.

The clock of the neighbouring priory of the Trinity had just struck eleven, and Miriam was preparing to retire for the night, when a loud knocking at the outer door arrested her purpose. After a moment's hesitation, to consider whether at that hour such a course would be advisable, she resolved to inquire the purpose of this summons, and forthwith repaired to the door.

"Who knocks?" she asked, in a tremulous tone.

"Where is your sire, the mediciner, fair mistress?" was the reply.

"Alas, sir!" rejoined Miriam, "he is in prison."

"Alas, indeed!" responded the other. "But cheer up, my daughter! I will set him at liberty straight. Thou knowest my voice, I ween? I am Master Cobbs."

"God, he be thanked!" exclaimed Miriam, hastily removing the fastenings of the door. "Will not you enter, sir?"

"Ay, certes," said her interlocutor. "I would confer with you, maiden." And, as the last bolt was withdrawn, he rudely pushed open the door.

Miriam started back amazed. She suffered the lamp to fall from her trembling hand; for, as the reader will have conjectured, the person whom she had admitted was Sir Alfred Sinclair.

"Fear not," said Sir Alfred, smiling at the success of his stratagem. "Thou shalt meet no harm, lovely maid."

"Caitiff knight!" exclaimed Miriam, pale with terror, "what wouldst thou?"

"Thy fair company," replied Sir Alfred. "And see," he added, drawing a poniard from its sheath, and holding it up before her eyes, "if thou dare to utter an alarm, this cold steel shall be acquaint with thee."

Miriam shrank before the miscreant's weapon. "Oh, spare me, sir!" she screamed. "For pity's sake, spare me!"

"Thou hast nothing to fear, fair trembler," said Sir Alfred. "Don thy hood, and come quietly away, and 'twill be better for thee and for thy sire."

Miriam hesitated; but Sir Alfred, again menacing her with the poniard, forced her up stairs to the upper chamber, where she donned her hood and scarf. He then conducted her from the house, before which, without the garden, Rowland White was waiting with two horses. On one of the horses Sir Alfred placed Miriam; and taking his place behind her, and bidding Rowland White to follow, rode off.

Leaving Miriam, for the present, to pursue her journey, the chronicler must recur to the fortunes of his hero.

Nearly a month after Miriam's abduction, which he had discovered on the following morning, Dick—who, as well as Master Simon, had exerted himself to the utmost to track her steps—accidentally encountered Mistress Alice Fitzwarren. It was the same hour at which, on a former occasion, she had apprised him of the suit of Master Cottle—it was the same place, and, as then, she was weeping. Her back was towards him, so that, as he stood on the threshold of the chamber, she did not observe him; but his eyes were bent on her as though he would search her soul. She held a paper in her right hand, and a white kerchief in the other, and, when she withdrew the one, she would hold the other up before her eyes. He advanced, on tip-toe, to where she stood; and peeped over her shoulder. He uttered an exclamation of surprise; for the paper on which Mistress Alice was gazing bore a representation of his own countenance.

"What means this bold behaviour, sir?" demanded Mistress Alice, colouring to the brow as she hastily crumpled up the paper.

"Lady," said Dick, throwing himself at her feet, "upbraid me not!—upbraid me not! If I err in loving thee—and I call God to witness that I do love thee—then Heaven, also, is to blame—and more than I—for making thee so lovely and so good."

"I must not listen to this from my father's servant," said Mistress Alice, bursting into tears.

"True, true, lady," replied Dick. "If ever I presume further, thou wouldst do ill to listen. But the meanest hind, as thou knowest, may love the highest dame. Otherwise, God were cruel to awaken love where passion is inhibited. But I presume, lady.—I would only vow fealty—only disclose my love; and, I thank our Lady, I can die happy. I ask no love in return. I seek no Will-o'-the-wisp hopes. I crave forgiveness only."

In the fourteenth century, and for several centuries anterior, the romantic love to which Dick here alludes, so long as it aspired not to the nuptial benediction of a priest, was very generally suffered. Princesses had elected champions among the lowest

order of knights; titled dames had martial plebeians and humble minstrels for their avowed admirers; and young ladies of wealth and degree, imbued with the high romance and chivalrous character of the times, often sacrificed their hearts where they would have thought it criminal to surrender their hands. Such being the case, and Dick's prayer, moreover, being very moderate in tone, it was no marvel that Mistress Alice hesitated.

"I do forgive you, Dick," she said, at length. "I dare say you can scarce help loving me; for we were children together, and we have grown up together; and, only that it would displease my sire, I think we ought to—love together. I only hope you will forget me, Dick. I only wish you were a lord—as you deserve to be."

Dick did not reply; but a person who stood on the threshold, and who had overheard the preceding dialogue, muttered "haw!" and stole, unperceived, away.

"I thought I heard some one speak," said Mistress Alice, looking round. "But no; 'tis only the terror of conscious guilt, for I know my father would account our conference a sin."

"And I the sinner," observed Dick, as, rising to his feet, he pressed both his hands on his forehead, and quitted the chamber.

For more than a fortnight afterwards, Dick saw very little of Mistress Alice. One evening, as he was working in the garden, he heard a footstep behind him, and, turning round, he espied that young lady. It was a lovely evening in June. The air, the lucidity of which was just shaded by the twilight, teemed with grateful fragrance; and the voice of the nightingale, carolling his vespers, wakened melodious thoughts in the human mind. Dick advanced to meet the lady whose image was blended with the essence of his soul.

It is next to impossible for two young hearts, glowing with impetuous feelings and headlong impulses, to stray together, at the gentle season of twilight, through the gay garden or merry greenwood, or even over the vernal and jocund fields, and not feel that they palpitate in unison, and that there is a fellowship of sentiment and ideas betwixt them. Some such reflection as this, perhaps, stole over the minds of our primitive parents, when, at their first interview in the garden of Eden, they mutually understood that they were made for each other, and that in their eyes, though every object was a beautiful novelty, and existence itself a wondrous and abrupt miracle, it was the presence of both alone that made that garden of gardens a paradise. Love, whose first low suspirations escape unheeded, is often the offspring of this silent sympathy, which, before he is himself a conscious passion, prepares him a bed of tender memories, and lulls him to sleep with harmonious meditations. And Mistress Alice and Dick, as they looked at each other, and then, as if to relieve their eyes, looked round the garden, felt that, though only their breath

escaped from their lips, their bounding hearts were holding communion. Throughout that day—nay, throughout every day, and every night too, Dick had been the principal, the all-absorbing idea of Mistress Alice's mind. One moment his forlorn situation would move her to pity—"pity is a' n to love:"—and she would compute his misfortunes, think what his feelings were while those misfortunes oppressed him, and speculate whether, in moments of extreme misery, hope and fortitude had ever forsaken him; and thus, as it were, blending her own with his spirit, she would ideally undergo the same misfortunes, develop the same feelings, indulge similar hopes, and be sustained by the same fortitude as he himself had undergone, developed, entertained, and displayed. And yet, in that moment of transport, while a nerve seemed to jut itself from the heart to the lips, and on its passage to convulse the bosom of each with delightful emotion, as though it were the conductor of bright thoughts and loving vows, which, in their very conception, awakened a sense of bliss that may be imagined but not expressed—in that moment, when there was none but God to observe them, blushes suffused the cheeks of the lovers: it was—incomprehensible mystery—shame without guilt!

Yet it was a glorious hour, which passed fleet as a minute, and sweet as a melody, and bright as a summer morning over the souls of the youthful lovers; and not the less delicious that there was never a word of passion spoken, never a syllable of love breathed. But love has a language of its own; and of this language, which is current in heaven, Mistress Alice and Dick availed themselves. Passion was in the tones of their voices, love was in the pupils of their eyes, sympathy in the heavings of their bosoms, and delight, that tongue might not tell of, or breath embody, was painted on their cheeks.

"I am sure," said Mistress Alice, when they had been conversing for about an hour, "you are destined for a high station, Dick."

"Would it were so!" exclaimed Dick; "for then I might hope to win this hand."

"And haply, thou mayst yet win it," observed a third person.

The lovers turned hastily round; and each of them, fearing for the other, trembled.

"I say, lady," continued the interloper, nodding his head, as if he were about to deliver a dogma which he defied the greatest philosophers on earth to dispute, "he may yet win that hand; for 'perseverance accomplisheth many things.'"

The lovers were quite abashed; but Master Simon (for the speaker was none other) insisted that, without paying any attention to him, they should resume the dialogue which he had interrupted, and which, though he had heard its conclusion only, he doubted not would afford him considerable entertainment.

"'Tis a droll thing enow," he observed, "for ye two to be

lovers; but droller things have happened. Go to, then! Shall I be a balk to ye? Am I an intermeddler, think ye? Go to!"

But Mistress Alice, instead of going-to, or, as Master Simon wished, making love to Dick, turned on her heel, and ran away. Dick and Master Simon, however, stood still, and looked at each other for some moments without speaking. At length, Master Simon shook his head, and observed that, though it was unquestionably the happiest condition of man, there were several little annoyances attendant on matrimony which often discomposed him.

"I seldom hear you complain, Master Simon," observed Dick.

"Nay," said Master Simon; "nor ought I; but you know, Dick, the poor mediciner used to tell me it befitted a married man to keep his house in order. Now, my dame cries me nay to this; and no sooner do I begin to put the place to rights than she bids me mind my own business. When, having coaxed her to be quiet, I have placed things in tolerable order, the children rebel; and while some turn the chairs into horses, others chalk the table, and deface the wainscot."

"Thy labour is lost, then," observed Dick. "But have you any news of the rebels, sir?"

"Ay; 'twas that brought me hither," replied Master Simon. "One Wat Tyler, with one hundred thousand men, is coming on to London. They have encamped, as I am advised, on Blackheath."

"I am sorry for't," said Dick.

"I hear there is one among them," continued Master Simon, "whom I know. I should like to see if he is really there."

"Who is he?" asked Dick.

"Of that anon," replied Master Simon. "Will you journey thither with me; and see if he is there?"

"Willingly," returned Dick.

"To-morrow, then," said Master Simon, "at day-break, we will visit the rebel camp. Till then, Dick, farewell!"

CHAPTER VI.—THE CLERK.

INTRODUCES THE READER TO THE CAMP OF WAT TYLER, AT BLACKHEATH, WHERE AN INCIDENT OCCURS THAT FORETOKENS THE EARLY CONCLUSION OF THIS HISTORY.

ON the following morning, about an hour after day-break, Dick and Master Simon approached Blackheath. That noted rendezvous of the gallant men of Kent lay open before them; but never before, perhaps, did it present a scene so busy as that which it then exhibited. The levying of an impost called the poll-tax, which assigned to the king a groat on the head of every person above the age of fifteen years, and which was immediately demanded by the exigencies of the government, had created a widely-spread disaffection among the people; and a handful of designing men, aided by the seditious discourses of a maniac priest, availed themselves of this discontented spirit, to incite the people to riot. An abandoned miscreant, whose real name has not transpired, but who is known to posterity by the appellation of Wat Tyler, refused to pay the tax for his daughter—a full-grown woman—whom he affirmed to be under the specified age; and, as that functionary persisted in discharging his duty, struck the tax-gatherer on the forehead with a heavy hammer, which caused his instant death. Wat Tyler then assembled his neighbours, and having declared that his daughter had sustained a brutal insult at the hands of the deceased, and assured them that the government intended to strip them of all their rights—to burn their dwellings, to tear them from their families, and to reduce them to the most abject bondage—exhorted them to rise, arm, and resist. The ignorant peasantry, seduced by the harangues of such insidious demagogues, rose in masses; and plundered and burned and destroyed all that was fair and venerable and sacred in the land. Blood—the blood of the illustrious and brave—flowed like water; devastation marked the track of the rebel array; and the flames of many a lordly castle illuminated, while the shrieks of defiled innocence rent, the midnight air.

Master Simon and Dick were now in the vicinity of the multitude who had perpetrated these gigantic atrocities. Before them lay the extensive heath, crowded with rude tents and ruder huts—the latter constructed of green boughs, torn from the adjacent woods. In the centre of this castrensian array rose the gorgeous tent of the leader—Wat Tyler, decorated with seventeen costly streamers, the spoil of as many noble houses; and beside it, over a more humble but still splendid tent, rose the gay banner of parson Ball:—

When Adam tyll'd and Eve spann,
Who was then a gentleman?

Such was its memorable inscription!

Towards this latter tent Master Simon and Dick bent their steps. The area in its front was crowded with the insurgents; and from the interior of an uncovered waggon, in which Wat Tyler and a half-dozen others were also seated, parson Ball was addressing the congregation. To give an outline of his pernicious doctrines, which have lately been revived by a wretch whose name is too obscene to be spoken, too vile to be written, and too disgusting to be conjectured, would be aiding the propagation of a belief which, treating religion as a fable, and existence itself as a dream, aims at the destruction of all government, all order—which seeks to sever all the sweet associations of society, to suppress all the bright affections of man, and by denouncing Christianity as priestcraft, and representing justice as cruelty, would at once destroy peace in life and hope in death. This complete annihilation of human happiness was sought by parson Ball; and this, and far more than this, is sought by the more infamous disciples of socialism.

But having introduced Dick Whittington to company from whom he cannot be too soon extricated, and not wishing to incur the responsibility of continuing the reader in so noxious an atmosphere, the chronicler will for the present quit the camp for the Dover road, along which, on the morning in question, a cavalier and his train were proceeding Dover-wards.

“Dark-eyed maiden,” said the cavalier, addressing a horse-woman at his side, “wherefore art thou so cruel? Thou knowest thou’rt in my power, and yet, so thou wilt but be kind, I will treat thee generously.”

“My Lord,” replied Miriam Salmon—for such was the female’s name, “thou mayst threat and thou mayst promise; but nor threats nor bribes will surprise my honour. Thou hast bereft me of my sire——”

“He shall be restored to thee,” interrupted Sir Alfred. “I will deliver him, protect him, and enrich him, if thou wilt but accept my suit.”

“Never!” exclaimed Miriam, “not for the wealth of India would I sacrifice my truth.”

"Then we will on to France," said Sir Alfred. "For nearly seven weeks have I sued thee as my mistress; I will now command thee as my slave."

Miriam made no reply, and the baron and his train moved on in silence. It was now broad day, and as they turned a sweep of the road, about ten miles distance from the metropolis, they espied five horsemen coming from the opposite quarter. The baron ordered his train, which comprised four stout men-at-arms, to close round Miriam, and prepare to resist any aggression. In the meantime the other party advanced, and, as they drew nearer and nearer, Miriam, who had predetermined to supplicate their interference, at once recognised their leader.

"Henry Sinclair! Henry Sinclair!" she screamed, "help, for the honour of your mother! Help, for the Jew's daughter!"

The name of Henry Sinclair, shouted at the pitch of Miriam's voice, smote Sir Alfred to the heart. Ordering his men to follow, and seizing Miriam's bridle, he spurred his horse forwards; but there was one, whose features he had never forgotten, who planted himself in his path—it was Hubert Cromwell.

"Hound!" cried Sir Alfred, dropping Miriam's rein, and raising his rapier, "die!"

"To the rescue, gallants!" vociferated Master Henry. "Sinclair, to the rescue!"

"Sinclair, to the rescue!" shouted his falconer, esquire, and Clarissa.

Miriam watched the fight. She saw one of the combatants fall—a pale-faced but lovely page—Clarissa. Then she heard a loud shout; and, turning round, descried a large party of horse approaching. They were a motley array—peasants, discarded soldiers, dirty-faced craftsmen, and lads from the plough, armed to the teeth. They were led by a brawny, well-set man, of middle stature, mounted on a stout black horse, and bearing a red banner, inscribed—

The Comuns of Englonde.

"Yield!" cried the leader, dashing in among the combatants.

Both Sir Alfred Sinclair and Master Henry, as they glanced at the overwhelming force which confronted them, saw that, even if they made common cause against the common enemy, resistance would be unavailing; and they therefore surrendered to the leader of the commons, though by what authority the commons interfered they could not divine. Meanwhile the gaunt falconer had dismounted, and sprang to the side of Clarissa, who, he found, had been run through the body.

"Hold out awhile!" said the gaunt falconer, as a tear rushed to his eye. "Hold out awhile, dear! Thou hast died a soldier's death."

"My poor boy!" exclaimed Master Henry, who at this moment discovered Clarissa's condition, and sprang to her side—"My

faithful page!" he continued, bending over her; "my honest Hal!"

Clarissa looked up, and fixed her eyes fondly on her master and the falconer; but the latter turned away his head. She moved her lips, and, even over the frosty pallor of approaching death, the warm blush of modesty usurped her cheek.

"Let me be moved honourably, master," she said.—"*I am a woman.*"

"'Tis true," observed the falconer, perceiving that Master Henry looked incredulous. "She has followed you for love's sake. Her name is Clarissa."

Master Henry stood motionless and mute. For two or three moments he looked steadfastly in Clarissa's face, as though he would associate her with bygone events, and then, stooping down, he kissed her icy lips.

"God—have—mer-cy!" sighed Clarissa; and those were the last words that she ever spoke, for in five minutes she was a corpse.

"To horse! to horse!" shouted the leader of the commons.

"Let me bear away the body!" cried Master Henry.

But the leader was already out of hearing, and his followers, tearing them from Clarissa's side, forced Master Henry and the falconer to take up a position in their ranks, brutally exclaiming, as they threw the body of Clarissa to one side of the road, that the dead would serve the birds for food.

Miriam Salmon, the two Sinclairs, and their followers, were now escorted by their captors to the camp of Wat Tyler, to which camp an hour's ride introduced them. As they entered the camp their leader beckoned Hubert Cromwell to his side.

"You forget not my countenance, I see," he said, in an under tone.

"No, Master Whittington," replied Hubert Cromwell. "I have good cause to remember you; and since we met last, in the haunted chamber of Arkton Castle, I have learned you were wedded to my sister."

"And my boy?" said Whittington. "Dost know aught of my boy?"

"Of *thy* boy," returned Hubert, "I know nothing; but there is the boy"—he pointed to Master Henry—"whose life you saved that night."

"Indeed," said Whittington. "Well, I dare not suffer you to depart now. I must have you all before Wat Tyler, our leader; but fear nought. None of your party shall meet harm, I promise you."

"Enough," rejoined Hubert; and they proceeded on their way.

Parson Ball had just concluded his harangue, in which he had been inveighing bitterly against kings and aristocrats, when Dick and Master Simon, hearing the tramp of horses' feet, turned round,

and discovered our prisoners and their captors. Both Dick and Master Simon, at their first glance at the heterogeneous cavalcade, recognised the faces of several of the prisoners; but as they could not at the moment render them any service, and might by claiming their acquaintance endanger their own lives, they resolved to avoid their observation. Meanwhile the prisoners were placed in order before Wat Tyler's tent; and all of them save Sir Alfred and Master Henry, both of whom swore that before they resigned their swords they would render their lives, were deprived of their weapons.

"And what are ye?" cried Wat Tyler, striding up to Sir Alfred and Master Henry.

"Who art thou, bold traitor?" demanded Sir Alfred.

"Foul-mouthed peer," rejoined Wat Tyler, raising his hand, "dost thou beard me?"

"And darest thou to raise thy hand against a belted baron?" replied Sir Alfred, his patrician spirit, which evil passions had so long obscured, bursting the bounds of policy. "Beshrew thy heart, base slave! begone!"

Wat Tyler, surprised and awed at the baron's commanding presence, shrank back; but the impulse was momentary.

"Seize him!" he roared, addressing his minions.

"Back, ye traitors! slaves! brutes! devils!" cried Sir Alfred, struggling to free his limbs.

Master Henry, forgetting all his wrongs, drew forth his rapier, and determined to succour his uncle; but Hubert Cromwell, more prudent, held him back. The gaunt falconer, however, was not to be so restrained. He sprang forwards; and wresting a weapon from the hands of one of the rebels, and knocking him down with its hilt, he made up to Sir Alfred's side. But his success was transient; and exhausted by their exertions, and overpowered by numbers, both he and Sir Alfred were obliged to succumb.

"Hoist them to yonder tree!" cried Wat Tyler, foaming with rage. "But hold! bring me this fine lord hither awhile. Ho!" he continued, as Sir Alfred was dragged before him, "I have somewhat for you, master! There," he added, as he spat in his face, "There—there"—and he dug his spurred heel into his mouth. "Off with him! off with him!"

A rope was thrown over the bough of an adjacent tree, and noosed round Sir Alfred's neck. A man who was perched on the bough, and whose ferocious countenance well fitted him for a hangman, then hauled up the rope; and having hoisted Sir Alfred into the air, and secured the end of the rope round the trunk of the tree, he sprang on to Sir Alfred's shoulders, and speedily terminated his sufferings. The falconer, who had been watching the execution with starting eyeballs, was now ordered to prepare himself for a similar fate; and his hands were bound, and the noose fitted accordingly.

Dick had been an impatient spectator of this vindictive cruelty. It has been before remarked that his resolutions were quickly taken, and that his inventive powers, which had extricated him from many a dilemma, were of a superior order. But his present design, as well as ready genius in its conception, required strong nerve in its execution. He did not, indeed, hesitate a moment, but, disregarding the whispered remonstrances of Master Simon, to whom he confided his purpose, he pushed through the crowd to the presence of Wat Tyler.

"I come," he said, "as a delegate from the poor citizens of London." There was a murmur of welcome from the surrounding crowd. "They invite you forward to fight for them."

"And if you are Wat Tyler," said Master Simon, who thought that he might as well die with Dick, "I, too, am commissioned to welcome you."

"This is good news, truly," returned the ruffian whom they had addressed. "Will ye open the gates for us?"

"Certes, my lord," replied Master Simon.

"My lord! Dost thou lord me?" asked Wat Tyler, drawing himself up. "We deal not in such ware, courteous sirs."

"We do! we do!" cried the crowd. "Thou shalt be a lord. Hurrah for Lord Tyler!"

"I seek not dignities, good commons," said Wat Tyler, with affected humility. "Now, prithee, force me not."

"We will! we will!" shouted the crowd.

"Then I must need consent," said Wat Tyler.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" vociferated the crowd, overjoyed at their leader's condescension.

"And now, my lord, I would represent to your lordship," said Dick, "how evil reports have gone before ye,—reports invented by the rich to keep the poor in ignorance and subjection. They have said, my lord, your lordship is a man of blood, come out to slay and to destroy. We beseech you, therefore, though all these prisoners have deserved death, to permit them to depart, so that, when they thus give the lie to those false reports, our cause may be thereby advanced."

Wat Tyler's brow grew dark.

"Whatever it is draws me to this young citizen," said the elder Whittington, "I feel I could die willingly by his side. He speaks truth, my lord," he added, addressing Wat Tyler. "Be sure, he speaks truth. I am sure the commons will say he speaks truth."

"Ay, ay," responded the crowd; "the citizen speaks truth, be sure."

"Let the prisoners depart, then," returned Wat Tyler, sulkily. "And ye, good citizens, bear my respects to your fellows, and tell them I will succour them straightway."

The word was passed to stay the falconer's execution. The hangman had already hoisted him into the air, and was preparing

to spring on to his shoulders, when he was arrested by the reprieve. The falconer was instantly cut down; and when, after an interval of a few minutes, he opened his eyes, he found himself in the arms of Master Simon.

"The learned Doctor Catchpenny"—he muttered.

"Ay, I know," interrupted Master Simon, "'twas verified at last; and lest it should terminate more seriously, we had best retreat."

"Thou speakest good sooth," returned the falconer, as he recognised Master Simon, and grasped his hand.

He rose to his feet, and took up his place in Master Henry's train, in which Miriam, at Dick's request, also took her place, and that party immediately quitted the camp. Dick and Master Simon followed on foot. They had just quitted the heath, and were congratulating themselves on their fortunate escape, when they heard the tramp of a horse, in a furious gallop, close in their rear. Before they could arrange any plan of proceeding they were overtaken by the horseman, in whom, at the first glance, Master Simon recognised the elder Whittington.

"How fare you?" asked Master Simon, who, it may be necessary to explain, had been made acquainted with him by the mediciner, who had encountered him by chance.

"Well," answered Whittington senior.

"I should scarce think it," said Master Simon, "knowing, as I do, that you are banded with blood-thirsty rebels, and bearing arms against your lawful prince."

"Peace, citizen!" said the senior Whittington, sternly. "Kings are either tyrants or puppets. They acknowledge no law but the law of might; and against that I oppose right."

"Misguided man," said Dick, "prithee beware. Kings rule by divine right—not the divine right which some aver, that descends direct from God—but the right given by Christian policy and human reason, both of which are divine."

"Aptly said, by George!" said Master Simon, slapping Dick's back. "I will see thee a lord yet. Remember what the poor mediciner always says—'Perseverance accomplisheth many things.'"

The elder Whittington seemed to be struck by the compact quaintness of Dick's sentiments. His prejudices, however, were too deeply rooted, and the doctrine of equality—which in heaven or on the earth, in the air, the ocean, or the depths of darkness, is incompatible with existence, and which, even if it could be adopted, would prove the most debasing of despotisms—was in his eyes too fascinating to be abruptly repudiated.

"There is something in thy face," he said to Dick, "that reminds me of past days. Thine eye recalls an eye that I once knew; and all thy features strike me as familiar. I followed thee on this hint, thinking to question thee. But it matters not. We have different opinions; thine leads thee to defend the king, mine impels me to uphold the commons." His voice quivered with

emotion ; and bending his eyes on Dick, and emitting a deep sigh, he turned his horse's head, and rode back to the camp.

"Humph!" said Master Simon, "I like not his company. He is as arrant a rebel as here and there one."

Dick did not think so. "That man's words," he said, "have sunk deep in my mind. I feel he hath a secret influence over me."

They journeyed on in silence. At length they reached the city, which wore a different aspect from that which it presented in the morning. William Walworth, the mayor, had ordered the city gates to be shut, in order that the Kentish rebels, of whose number and vicinity he was duly apprized, might not only be kept out of the city, but be prevented from communicating with their Essex compatriots ; but the London mob, agitated by designing demagogues, flew to arms, and succeeded in obtaining and keeping possession of the gates. The king shut himself up in the Tower of London ; but as Jack Straw, at the head of ten thousand men from Essex, immediately beleaguered that fortress, his majesty judged it prudent to evacuate it, and retire to the Tower Royal. Scarcely had he escaped, which he contrived to do by the river, when the insurgents entered the Tower of London, and commenced that series of hellish enormities which the human heart chills to think of, and the sickened brain refuses to enumerate. The venerable Archbishop of Canterbury, whose support almost hallowed a corrupt church, was dragged from the consecrated altar to the streaming scaffold ; and there, while incarnate demons danced and yelled around, his hoary head was *notched* from its trunk. Neither age nor sex, innocence nor worth, nobility nor hierarchy, were spared or regarded ; and the wild scream of polluted beauty, the stifled groan of venerable age, the curse of the bereaved wife, and the cry of the hapless orphan, confounded the senses ; and the proud blood of the patrician deluged Tower Hill with a living dye, and rendered it a spot accursed. Yet of the arch monster who headed this unnatural outbreak, and who, as he deserved, died the death of a dog, an Englishman and a poet has made a hero !

"Well," said Master Simon, as he and Dick entered Leadenhall Street, "God send all this end well. I am glad, at any rate, that Miriam is under the protection of Master Henry and Hubert Cromwell. Leaden Hall is a more secure asylum than we could afford her."

"Ay," replied Dick ; "and I have now some hopes of her sire's acquittal."

Master Simon shook his head. "I doubt it," he said. "But get you on home, Dickon ; I will be thither anon. And, as Master Fitzwarren will haply require my presence throughout this commotion, I will bring my dame and young ones with me."

They parted on reaching Master Fitzwarren's house. Dick inflicted a timid rap on the door, which was instantly opened by Mistress Alice herself, who bade him follow her. She led the way to

the hall ; and though she moved with a firm step, and spake in her usual tone of voice, Dick traced in the ashy paleness of her features the alarm that she endeavoured to conceal. On entering the hall, where his master and all the men in his employment were assembled, he was accosted by Master Fitzwarren, who inquired whence he had come.

“ From the rebel camp, at Blackheath, sir,” replied Dick.

“ So I have been advised,” cried Master Fitzwarren. “ Didst take note of their array ?” And Dick nodding affirmatively, he continued :—“ Canst give me an account thereof ? I will straightway make a report to the mayor.”

“ Dick can write, sir,” said a melodious voice ; “ and if you think the report will be acceptable to the mayor, his inscription thereof might obtain him preferment.”

The speaker ceased, and shrank back abashed ; but before Dick looked at her dazzling eye, or caught a glimpse of her blushing cheek, he knew the voice of the dark-eyed Miriam. On her way to Leaden Hall, as he afterwards learned, she had been encountered by Master Fitzwarren, and the worthy merchant had insisted on her partaking of his hospitality, which, as she was better acquainted with him than with the inmates of Leaden Hall, she had joyfully accepted.

“ You can write, then ?” said Master Fitzwarren to Dick. “ Your silence on this subject has cost you much preferment. But, never mind ; it is not yet too late.”

Dick sat down at the table, which was furnished with the necessary apparatus, and commenced the inscription of his report. Mistress Alice looked over his right shoulder, and Master Fitzwarren over the other ; and the remaining spectators, amazed that so humble a person should possess such accomplishments, crowded round to examine every character that he traced. Dick’s cheeks were flushed with pride ; his hands trembled with delight ; for he knew, as he traced the pompous letters on the lifeless paper, that Mistress Alice looked wondering on. He had finished it—finished the document which was to advance him in the scale of society—which exalted him in the eyes of Mistress Alice ; and in that moment of triumph, when fortune seemed to light upon his pen, it was only natural that he should bestow a grateful glance on the bright and beautiful creature whose tuition had preferred him so high.

What profound sorrow swam in the eye that met his ! What an amount of wretchedness and of heart-rending pangs was expressed in the pallor of that bright cheek ! And Dick detected all. His cheek, too, turned pale ; his eyes, also, filled with tears ; his heart, likewise, turned over and over ; and as he raised his hand to his throbbing brow, and said that his head ached very much—very much indeed, he knew, as surely as though she had herself avowed it, that MIRIAM LOVED HIM !

CHAPTER VII.—THE CONFESSION.

WHAT CAME TO PASS IN THE GARDEN OF MASTER FITZWARREN.

MASTER COTTLE made his appearance just as Dick laid down his pen. He took up the report, which lay on the table, and having perused it, and pronounced it to be excellent caligraphy, inquired the name of its author. Master Fitzwarren pointed to Dick, who was making his egress from the room.

Dick, distracted by the unhappy discovery that he had just made, wended his way to the garden, and halted not till he had reached its extremity. Here stood a tall and umbrageous tree, the trunk whereof was encircled by a rustic bench, on which, while he tilled the adjacent parterre, Mistress Alice had often sat, and, unconscious that she was kindling passion in his breast, sang the metrical romances that were then popular. He sat down on the bench, and crossing his right over his left leg, and leaning his forehead on his right hand, bent his eyes on the grass. He was soon absorbed in reverie, and no sooner did one train of thought arise, and for a moment arrest his attention, than another interposed itself, and this, straightway, was banished by another. Such is the irregularity of abstract reflection, which, meteor like, darts through mental space, and, while with its refined lustre it eclipses substantial thought, proves by its limited existence that it is a vapour only.

"Dick!" said a voice beside him, as a small and trembling hand was placed in his.

"Miriam?" replied Dick, without looking up.

"Are you angry with me, Dick?" asked Miriam.

"Wherefore should I be angry with you?" returned Dick.

"For making known your accomplishments," replied Miriam.

"'Twas you taught them to me," said Dick, passionately. "Yet I am angry," he continued, after a moment's pause—"not with you, indeed, but with your sex. Scarce one of you, being of



Miss Alice Fitzwarren surprises Dick and Miriam.

age sufficient, that can find room in your hearts for more than one—be that one a crocodile or a hero. You suffer all your affections, gradually and imperceptibly, to ooze forth from your hearts, not seeking to learn whether they are swallowed up by a villain, or—which often happens—discovered by their object. At this I am angry, gentle, kind Miriam; for I fear for that timid, innocent heart of thine.”

“You know it, then?—You know it?” said Miriam, rising. “I saw that you knew it!”

“Hold!” exclaimed Dick, detaining her. “Sit down, dear Miriam. I have been the innocent cause of your distress. Suffer me, now, to cheer you up—to attempt your comfort.”

“Comfort!” exclaimed Miriam: “the comfort of disdain—of contempt.”

“Not so, foolish damsel,” said Dick, with emotion. “There breathes but one in the wide world whom I would prefer to you—even her, Miriam, I love not more than you, though, certes, with a different affection.”

“Yes, yes,” returned Miriam: “I recollect. You have called me sister, have you not?”

“I know not what to call you,” said Dick, taking her hand in his own. “God bless you!” he added. And he raised her hand to his lips, and kissed it. As Miriam attempted to draw away her hand, which he still held to his lips, Dick involuntarily raised his eyes, and Miriam, seeing an abrupt blush mount to his cheek, turned her eyes in the same direction. Her glance, as well as that of Dick, fell on the indignant countenance of Mistress Alice Fitzwarren.

Dick, distracted, knew not what to do. His first impulse would have led him to the side of Mistress Alice, to explain what had transpired, and to exculpate himself from any suspicion which appearances might excite; but the next moment, just as he was about to drop Miriam’s hand, his delicate sense of honour rushed to the rescue, and forbade him to take any step that might wound Miriam’s feelings. The latter person, however, saw through his hesitation. She extricated her hand from his, which trembled with excitement, and sprang to the side of Mistress Alice.

“If you knew how he loved you,” she said, “how your smiles gladden his heart, and how your displeasure afflicts him, you would not look so unkindly.”

“Young mistress,” said the other, “wouldst thou gainsay the evidence of mine own eyes?”

“Ay, will I, lady,” replied Miriam. “Why, *I* love *him*. I’ve loved him eight years. I’ve loved him, lady, since the day we first met, when we were but children. But he loves *you*, not *me*. *He pities me*.”

Mistress Alice seized Miriam’s hand, and led her towards the house. A terrace ran along the back of the house, connected by

a flight of stone steps with the garden, and, by a small door in one corner, with a little room, which looked out on the garden. Hither did Mistress Alice conduct Miriam ; and, having closed the door, bade her sit down, and compose herself.

"Prithee compose yourself, fair mistress," she said. "So lovely a damsel should scarce mourn the loss of one heart. There are plenty, I trow, would bound with joy for thy favour."

Though Miriam was not endued with that temerity and inflexibility of purpose which surmount all opposition, and which form, even at this distance of several thousand years, a prominent feature in the character of her immortal namesake, and though, on the contrary, she was of a timid disposition, and, when peril was imminent, irresolute, yet her affections were unalterable, her passions were vehement, and her feelings impetuous. The character of "the star of the sea," as depicted by the most enlightened of her contemporaries, and the most faithful of historians, so far resembled that of our Miriam ; but the latter, perhaps, was the truer woman, as well as the more useful, in wanting the high qualities of the historic heroine. Nevertheless, as has been observed, Miriam's disposition was not entirely dissimilar to that of her illustrious namesake. Frequently would her passions, under the influence of a transient impulse, elevate her for a moment above her natural timidity, and the proud spirit of the Hebrew maiden might as frequently be traced in the precipitance and impetuosity of her feelings.

"Talk not to me," she said, "of other lovers. Know, lady—though I am less fair, less happy, and a daughter of a persecuted race, I am as constant and devoted as yourself."

"I question it not," faltered Mistress Alice.

"Nor do I resign those qualities even now," continued Miriam. "No! my love is too pure. I can love till they wind me in a shroud—till I am wedded to the tomb. Ay, can I!"

"That can you," said Mistress Alice.

"But *he* loves *you*," pursued Miriam ; "therefore do I leave him to you. Thus, lady, my love is superior to yours, which seeks your own as well as his happiness, while mine, less selfish, seeks to please him at the expense of my own peace."

"I am unworthy of him," said Mistress Alice ; "but he is worthy of you."

"Beshrew my pride!" exclaimed Miriam, softened by the patient meekness of Mistress Alice, whose eyes were filled with tears. "Indeed thou art all in all to him, and more worthy than I. But then I had made him mine for years. I watched every loving word that he spake—every fond thought that he delivered ; and treasured them up, as I would life-blood, in the core of my heart. I dreamed of him at night, I thought of him by day, and when he was present, though I scarce seemed to know it, I was in a delirium of joy,—which was oblivious alike of thought and word

and act. You see, lady, 'tis very hard to part with such a fond conceit, is't not, now?"

"Indeed, indeed, it is," said Mistress Alice.

The suavity of Mistress Alice's voice, and the deep sympathy that it expressed, had an immediate effect upon the temper of Miriam. Her dark eyes filled with tears; and as a sob convulsed the tranquil surface of her bosom, and unbarred the floodgates of her overcharged heart, she threw herself into the arms of Mistress Alice, and wept aloud.

Meanwhile, Dick, whom these chronicles left in the garden, relapsed into the reverie which Miriam had disturbed. He had not, however, been long thus—thinking now of Mistress Alice and anon of Miriam, when he was awakened from his abstraction by a smart slap on the shoulder. He started up straightway, and beheld Masters Cottle and Simon Racket.

"Art sleeping?" cried Master Simon. "Art i' the humours? Or hath that sombre-owl—melancholy, perched upon thy brain?"

"Angelical, i' faith," said Master Cottle, who, besides entertaining a high opinion of his taste in dress, considered Master Simon a man of wit. "To him again, Simon. Thou'rt a man of parts, i' faith."

Master Simon, thus encouraged, winked significantly at Dick—thereby intimating that he was about to touch on a matter which was known to themselves only, and which, therefore, they alone could enjoy; and continued—"Or wast thinking of thy lady-love?"

"Exquisite, i' faith," roared Master Cottle—"heavenly, by dame Venus! To him again, Simon. Thou'rt a choice wag, i' faith!"

"A truce to your wit, sirs," said Dick; "for my present mood can ill brook the chafe, and I know well you'd grieve to vex me."

"Ay, would we," cried the others, simultaneously. "But what is't ails thee?"

"It matters not now, your worships," replied Dick.

"Well, well," returned Master Simon, "cheer thee up. We have a business on hand that we would fain confer with you upon."

"What is it?" asked Dick.

"Haw," said Master Cottle—"briefly, Dick, I think we might rescue the mediciner from Newgate."

"As how?" asked Master Simon, who, though he had previously heard the scheme of Master Cottle fully detailed, and had then expressed his approbation of it, seemed to hear it now for the first time; and, in order that he might exhibit due admiration, rubbed the palms of his hands together, looked Dick steadfastly in the face, and suffered his benign, characteristic smile to light up his features. "Tell us as how, your worship."

"Haw, will I!" said Master Cottle. "By Jove and Juno, I

will! Why, then, you must know, Dick, the priests are striving to convert this mediciner to the true faith, for he will be damned else—God save us!”

“Nay, now, your worship, how know you that?” asked Master Simon, suddenly stopping the friction of his hands. “Go to!”

“Your speech smacks of heresy, Simon,” resumed Master Cottle, gravely. “Hold thy peace, then, for I should be sorry to hear of thy being damned. The Jew—our Lady turn his heart!—is stubborn, and lists not the discourses of the priests. Howbeit, they persist, vowing they would rather he were an indifferent Christian than a good martyr; and so, in sooth, would I;—by Bacchus, would I!”

“But the plan to deliver him?” inquired Dick.

“Haw, true,” said Master Cottle. “Why, I purpose to visit him in the guise of a friar, you and Simon being clad as priests. When we are in the prison, and can confer with him, ’twill go hard but we will come out together.”

“Dost hear?” asked Master Simon of Dick, as he rubbed his hands with heartier vigour.

“Ay, sir,” replied Dick. “I have not much hope of our coming out together—at least, with the mediciner in company; but we may be able to confer with him, and he might devise a better plan. But where will we procure our disguise?”

“Leave that to me,” said Master Cottle. “Wilt engage in the undertaking?”

“Certes,” answered Dick.

“Follow, then,” said Master Cottle; and he led the way into the street.

CHAPTER VIII.—THE SIEGE.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE GAOL OF NEWGATE, AND AT THE MANSION
OF LADY ALICE DE WINDSOR.

NEWGATE, the gaol in which the mediciner was confined, always stood on or about the site of the present structure. "This gate," says Stow, "hath of long time been a *gaol*, or prison, for felons and trespassers, as appeareth by records in the reign of King John, and of other kings; amongst the which (records) I find one, testifying, that in the year 1218, the third of King Henry the Third, the king writeth unto the sheriffs of London, commanding them to repair the gaol of Newgate for the safe keeping of his prisoners, promising that the charges laid out should be allowed to them upon their accompt in the Exchequer. Moreover, in the year 1241, the Jews of Norwich were here hanged for circumcising a Christian child; (!) their house, called the Thor, was pulled down and destroyed. (!!) Aaron, the son of Abraham, a Jew at London, and three other Jews, were constrained to pay twenty thousand marks, at two terms in the year, or else to be kept perpetual prisoners in the Newgate of London, and in other prisons." (!!!)

Thus has the industrious historian given us a hint of the atrocities which were in former days perpetrated in Newgate; and thus has he, who usually winks at the enormous intolerance and unholy exactions of Rome, given us some idea, though a faint and imperfect one, of the persecution to which the inhuman priesthood subjected the unhappy sons of Judah. Master Salmon, the mediciner, was no exception to, but an illustration of, the general practice. A loyal and useful subject, unstained by crime, he was nevertheless laden with heavier shackles than the convicted assassin; and throughout his imprisonment, which had now lasted nearly three months, was never once suffered to commune with his friends. In vain he petitioned, in vain he protested; the only answer that was vouchsafed him came from the lips of a priest—

Sir Ambrose Pollard. He was therefore much surprised when, on the day specified in the preceding chapter, he was apprised by the gaoler that a Franciscan friar, accompanied by two priests, desired to have some discourse with him.

"I cannot cry them nay," replied the mediciner. "But tell them, I prithee, they may spare their arguments; for I am resolved to die in the faith of my fathers."

"Haw!" said the Franciscan friar, as he peeped over the gaoler's shoulders, and then, drawing aside his hood, disclosed his face. "Wilt persevere in thy guilt?"

"Perseverance accomplisheth many things;" suggested a priest, who at this instant stepped into the cell.

"Brothers," said a second priest, stepping before the gaoler, "this poor sinner is impenitent and stubborn; therefore, before we hold out to him those blessings which holy church vouchsafes to the penitent, or those curses which she denounces against the hardened, it is meet to implore the Divine assistance."

"Prithee, father, give me thy blessing," said the gaoler to the last speaker. "Never a young man spake like thee till now. I cannot tarry for thy praying, so prithee excuse me."

"*Benedicite!*" said the young priest; and the gaoler, bowing respectfully, departed.

"My sons," said the mediciner, on the gaoler's egression from the room, "what brings you hither?"

"We come to rescue you, father," said Dick. "And fear not for us, I prithee; for the city is in a commotion, which has caused every available functionary to mount patrol; and we are, besides, well armed."

"Alas!" exclaimed the mediciner, "it matters not; for I am chained to the wall."

"We have provided for that," said Dick, drawing a file from his vest. "Now, your worships," he added, addressing his ecclesiastical coadjutors, "you may essay your skill in the gay science."

Thus called upon, after extending their countenances to a consistent longitude, Masters Cottle and Racket commenced singing a psalm, or, rather, something which sounded like a psalm, though, as each of them adopted a different version, and none of the words was vernacular, it would have puzzled Sir Ambrose himself to discover its meaning. Nevertheless, it served the purpose for which the singers intended it,—it prevented the noise made by Dick's file from being overheard.

The mediciner's waist was encircled by an iron hoop, locked in a massive chain, which was fastened to the wall, and so fashioned, both in length and flexibility, that he could sit, stand, or lay. Dick first turned his attention to this chain, which his file soon severed; and then, continuing his labours, endeavoured to force the mediciner's manacles. While, however, he was thus engaged,

the mediciner suddenly arrested his hand, and, nodding his head towards the door, threw himself on the ground.

The mediciner, quick as light, fixed his chain so ingeniously that its inefficiency could not be detected ; and before the gaoler, whom he heard without, had opened the door, he had apprised each of the party of his vicinity. The gaoler now presented himself ; for though he had evidently a superstitious disinclination to interfere with the priests, and had not the least doubt of their clerical authenticity, yet the length of their stay, and the quiet manner in which the mediciner had received them—so different from his bearing towards the venerable Sir Ambrose Pollard, awakened suspicions which he could neither define nor trace. Dick, who perceived that the gravity of his demeanour had impressed him with awe, immediately accosted him, and bade him welcome.

“ Your long stay amazed me, reverend father,” returned the gaoler. “ I thought you were waiting for me to attend you out.”

“ Truly, thou art most courteous,” replied Dick ; “ but if it be lawful, and consistent with thy duty, I would rather tarry awhile : for though I am but a humble instrument, and unskilful withal, yet have I touched this poor sinner’s heart.”

The mediciner gave utterance to a penitential groan.

“ I hope I arrest not your discourse, father,” said the gaoler.

“ Nay, my son,” returned Dick. “ Prithee,” he added, hoping to stifle the suspicions which he perceived the gaoler entertained, and which he knew not how else to elude, “ prithee, abide its delivery.”

“ That he must not,” cried Master Simon ; “ I protest against it. ’Tis a placing of the clergy under the civil law.”

“ Nay, reverend sirs,” said the gaoler, thrown off his guard, “ let not me be cause of dissension among ye.”

“ Retire then, my son,” rejoined Dick, “ and take a poor priest’s benediction with thee.”

The gaoler, now satisfied of the innocence of the last speaker’s purposes, retired from the cell, but, with the precaution of an experienced functionary, locked the door after him. This circumstance, however, did not discourage our friends, who, directly they heard the key turned in the lock, resumed their respective tasks—Masters Cottle and Racket labouring with their voices, and Dick with his file.

Dick, after nearly half an hour’s toil, had just succeeded in dividing the manacles, when he heard the key introduced into the lock of the door. As the door opened, however, and disclosed the person of Sir Ambrose Pollard, the mediciner’s hands were free, and he was again extended on the floor.

Sir Ambrose Pollard had never forgotten the treatment that he had received from the mediciner at the lodgings of Master Simon Racket. He had long watched for an occasion which would afford him the means of revenge ; but while the mediciner was

supported by powerful friends—such as Dame Alice Perrers and her coadjutors, he watched for such an occasion in vain. When, however, the opposite party became ascendant, and Sir Alfred Sinclair had compassed the Jew's imprisonment, the vindictive priest pursued him with the most inveterate though disguised animosity. Under pretence of achieving his conversion, which he knew well could never be accomplished by him, he persecuted him with continual visits, and, while he professed a friendly feeling towards him, exerted himself to bring about his condemnation. He had been apprised by the gaoler that there were three ecclesiastics conferring with the mediciner; and enraged at their impertinent interference, and apprehensive that they might persuade him to profess, if not adopt, the Roman faith, he now rushed in. As he strode into the middle of the cell, without deigning to acknowledge the salutes of the seeming priests, Master Cottle glided stealthily to the door, and, encountering a significant glance from Dick, closed it.

"Sir Ambrose Pollard," said Master Simon, springing on his shoulders, and holding a naked dagger before his eyes, "say one word, and, by the God that made me! you cease to live."

The tone in which Master Simon spake, the threat which the speech conveyed, and, above all, the dagger that gleamed before his eyes, struck terror into the heart of the priest; and reflecting that, though one cry would bring him succour, he might be murdered before the gaoler could arrive, he did not attempt to raise an alarm.

"Keep him silent, Master Simon," cried Dick. "His clothes must serve to disguise the mediciner."

"A brave device," observed the mediciner, springing to his feet.

Sir Ambrose was speedily divested of his upper garments, which, as he was of a tall person, answered very well for the mediciner, who immediately donned them.

"I think we had best dispatch this caitiff priest," suggested Master Cottle.

"'Thou shalt do no murther,' " said the mediciner, "for so is it writ in the book of the law."

"True!" cried Dick. "Let us on, sirs; and prepare to force your way."

They emerged from the cell, leaving Sir Ambrose at large within, but locking the door without. No sooner, however, did Sir Ambrose hear the key turned in the lock, than he began kicking with all his force against the door, and calling on the gaoler to come to his assistance, and, at the same time, to arrest the fugitives.

It was fortunate for these latter, whose egression from the cell would otherwise have been frustrated, that the gaoler, at the moment, was in a remote part of the prison, and thus beyond the

reach of Sir Ambrose's invocations. A messenger had arrived, just as he had resolved on visiting the mediciner's cell, with a mandate from the mayor, directing him to put the prison in a state of defence, as the insurgents of Essex, under the command of Jack Cade, would probably attack it, and by this means the attention of the gaoler was diverted from his other duties. As our friends, however, were crossing the hall, and congratulating themselves on their good fortune, he suddenly confronted them.

"Sir Ambrose," he cried to the mediciner, "I have a word to say with you, and it like your reverence."

But the mediciner, instead of arresting, hastened his pace, and made rather abruptly for the door. His three friends closed round him, and laid their hands on their concealed weapons; for the gaoler, it seemed, was determined to commune with the person whom he mistook for Sir Ambrose, and with this purpose brushed up to them.

"Be firm," whispered Dick to the mediciner. "There are those outside who will cover your retreat."

"Sir Ambrose," cried the gaoler, "prithee stop!"

At this moment Dick had one hand on the handle of the door, and the other hand on the key, when the gaoler made his way through Masters Cottle and Racket, who brought up the rear.

"Suffer me to open the door, father," he said. "But, Sir Ambrose," he added, turning to the mediciner, "I must first speak with thee."

He caught hold of the mediciner's cassock, and pressed forward to address him, when a cry of treason rang through the hall.

"Will not I serve your turn as well as Sir Ambrose?" demanded Master Simon of the gaoler, as he knocked him on the head, and prostrated him to the floor.

Dick turned round the key and pulled open the door, but before any of his friends could dart out, three of the junior gaolers rushed into the hall. They immediately descried the situation of their principal, who, as he strove to rise, called vehemently for assistance; but our fugitives now disclosed their weapons; and the gaolers, being unarmed, were afraid to molest them. In a few moments, however, they supplied themselves with rapiers, which they snatched from a rack that stood in the hall, and advanced to the rescue; but in the interim Dick and his companions had darted out.

Master Henry Sinclair, with Hubert Cromwell and the gaunt falconer, having their hoods down and their rapiers drawn, stood outside, and directly their friends had sallied forth, they raised a pretended brawl, which diverted the attention of the few passers-by. The fugitives, meanwhile, ran off in different directions, having, previous to dispersing, agreed to rendezvous at the residence of Lady Alice de Windsor. When, therefore, the gaolers issued forth, though they were scarcely a minute behind, they found

the road impeded by a crowd that had gathered round Master Henry; and the fugitives, they perceived, had so scattered themselves that, unless they were intercepted by the patrol, the capture of any one of them seemed impossible. Nevertheless, as the gaolers were obliged to answer for their prisoners, body for body, they resolved to join in pursuit of the mediciner, whom they descried a short distance ahead.

The twilight was just beginning to fall over the city as the mediciner reached Cheapside. He made straight for the Standard, or permanent scaffold, which the succeeding twenty hours dyed with innocent blood; and, running round to the further side, crept under the beams that supported the platform. As soon as his pursuers came up, and perceived that he had disappeared, they thought that he had turned down Wood Street, which, about twenty yards further up, led off to the barbiean, or watch-tower. Thither, therefore, they repaired, hoping to overtake him before he could reach Cripplegate, whither they doubted not he had directed his steps.

Having thus thrown his pursuers off the scent, and seeing that, as the shops were all closed and scarcely a person was in the street, it was not likely that any would notice whither he passed, the mediciner walked at his quickest pace up Cheapside. As he passed the top of Gracious Street, down which he had intended to proceed, he perceived a large concourse of people pressing up the street, and, inferring from their shouts that they were a party of the insurgents, he ran up Leadenhall Street, and, turning down a dark court that led to Fish Street, made for the residence of Lady Alice de Windsor. In a few minutes he arrived thither, and having inflicted a loud rap on the door, and delivered the password to a domestic who hailed him from within, he was straightway admitted.

"Welcome, Sir Mediciner," said Lady Alice, when he was introduced to her presence; "how thou hast come hither is another matter."

"Which I will straight advertise you of, lady," replied the mediciner.

"And I, meanwhile, will look after our defences," said Lord Walter, who, on his entry, had greeted the mediciner with a kind welcome.

Lady Alice and the mediciner had been conversing for about half-an-hour, during which they had repeatedly been startled by the tumult that rent the air without, when the door was flung open, and Lord Walter rushed into the chamber.

"Hell is let loose!" he cried. "The demons have found you out, Alice; they have surrounded the house."

"Well, my lord," said Lady Alice, starting to her feet; "let us arm!"

There was not the slightest shadow in the animation that sprang into that beautiful face, not a speck in the coruscation that gleamed

from that dazzling eye; and the commonest observer, though he had had the heart of a coward and the judgment of a fool, could have seen that the words which her lips had uttered expressed the high resolve of her determined heart. Lord Walter stood mute, gazing in her face, and the mediciner raised his hands and eyes in speechless wonder.

"We can perish together," exclaimed Lord Walter, as he took his consort's hand. "But the house is well secured, and we may hold out."

"Ay, my lord," cried Lady Alice. "The crafty priests, whose lies have instigated this rabble to persecute me, even now that I am no longer a meddler in politics, shall find me resolute to the last."

She descended to the hall, where the domestics and retainers of her husband had now assembled, and, like Zenobia of old, infused new life into the dejected hearts of her array. The passionate eloquence that flowed like music from her lips, and the resolute tone in which it was delivered, fired the male portion of her hearers with a firm determination to die in her defence; and the females, though they were affected even to tears by the pathos of her speech, felt their hearts inspired with a manly fortitude.

In the meantime the insurgents without had commenced their operations. The mediciner, who reconnoitred them from a loophole by the side of the door, apprised Lord Walter that they had raised the trunk of a felled tree, with which, as he conjectured, they intended to force in the door.

"That must be prevented," cried Lord Walter. "Those who have bows follow me."

About half-a-dozen of archers followed their master to the roof of the house, whence they let fly their arrows among the concourse below; but, though they perceived that every arrow hit its mark, their volley did not arrest the transportation of the beam with which the door was to be forced. Lady Alice, however, had thought of a more effectual expedient. She ordered two large boilers which stood over the kitchen fire, and which were filled with boiling water, to be conveyed to the roof, and just as the beam was drawn back to be propelled with greater violence against the door, the scalding liquid was poured down on the besiegers.

The discordant yells that rose from the sufferers evinced the impression which the administration of the boiling fluid had produced. It was but momentary, however. The insurgents, rendered more furious by the resistance which they had encountered, determined to carry out their original design. The ponderous beam was again uplifted; the united strength of fifty men propelled it against the door; and the latter, though well secured with bolts and bars, yielded to the resistless percussion.

In the expectation of this event, Lord Walter had ordered the women of his household to ascend to the upper chambers. He

posted his men on the stairs, where, with the mediciner, he took up his own station. The stairs were at the further end of the hall, and could be defended for a considerable time by a few men. Lord Walter ranged his archers on the upper stairs, so that they might loose their shafts over the heads of the partisans, or men-at-arms, who were placed on the lower stairs, where, while the archers were fitting their shafts and taking aim, they could annoy their assailants with their long bills.

The insurgents now rushed into the hall. A party advanced to the stairs, at the foot of which Lord Walter and the mediciner had taken their stations; and those who were armed with pikes made a rush forwards, but the adroit manœuvres of the partisans, seconded by a well-directed volley from the archers, compelled them to retire. Two of the ringleaders consulted together for a few moments, and, after whispering to some of the bystanders, demanded a parley.

"What seek you?" asked Lord Walter.

"We seek Alice Perrers," answered the ringleader.

"*She is here!*" vociferated Lady Alice, as she sprang from the landing-place to the top of the lower banister, and supported herself in this position by the balustrade of the upper one. "Slaves! Alice Perrers mocks you!"

While Lady Alice looked over the heads of her husband's retainers on the insurgents below, and waved her defiance at the infuriate rabble, a party of the latter removed the fire from the grate, and, with the help of the live fuel and some logs which they added, kindled one in the centre of the hall. A loud yell drew the attention of the besieged to this new danger, and the stoutest of them was beginning to quail, and to talk of the propriety of capitulating, when a shout of "*Sancte Thomas of Canterbury and our fair city!*" and the tramp of galloping steeds, was heard without.

Master Cottle, Dick, and Master Simon, on reaching the house of Master Fitzwarren, were informed that the mayor had ordered all the citizens, save those who were incapacitated by age or debility, to assemble in arms, that evening, at the rendezvous of their respective wards. The Tun, on Cornhill, was the place assigned for the muster of that ward, and thither, at the hour of six, did Dick and his two friends repair. All three of them were mounted; for Master Cottle, as he was looked upon by the younger citizens as a person of the greatest consequence, had determined to make his appearance in the field with a well appointed staff, and he had therefore furnished his friends from his own stables. Ostentation was a part of Master Cottle's character, but as he was a captain of the ancient and honourable train-bands, and entertained some secret apprehensions that not a few of his men had joined the rebels, his ostentatious display of a lieutenant and aide-de-camp may be excused.



Lady Alice. Addressing the Insurgents.

"Ahaw! ahaw!" he cried, as, on reaching the rendezvous, he acknowledged the acclamations of his troop with the most approved bows.

About two hundred men had mustered, but of these not one half were mounted, and they, being the *beaux* of the city, looked up to Master Cottle as the *ne plus ultra* of chivalry. When, however, a buzz, which seemed to rise from a thousand mouths, though none could say that he saw a speaker, attracted their eyes westward, where the sky reflected the vivid glare of some tremendous fire, as though the entire city were a prey to flames, not a few of the city chivalry evinced a disposition to skulk.

"'Tis the Duke's palace! 'Tis the Savoy!" shouted a hundred voices. "The rebels have fired it! They will fire the whole city!"

"A mob has attacked the house of Lord de Windsor," cried a tremulous voice.

"Citizens, unsheathe your arms!" cried Master Cottle to his troop.

"'Tis no use, Master Cottle," shouted several voices. And fifty others shouted, "'Tis no use."

"Ahaw!" said Master Cottle. "Who is king of the bucks?"

"Master Cottle!" replied his troop.

"Who is the redoubtable leader of the bachelors?"

"Master Cottle!"

"Ahaw! is it so?" thundered Master Cottle. "Let the cowards that cry 'tis no use, and refuse to follow me, disobey this order—Stand to your arms!"

Not a man disobeyed; but Master Cottle, as he surveyed the whole troop at a glance, did not express his approbation further than by nodding his head.

"Forwards!" he cried, and clapping spurs to his horse, and waving his sword over his head, he led the way.

A few minutes brought them before the residence of Lord de Windsor; and the sudden appearance of such a well-appointed body of cavalry, and the well known war-cry of the London youth—"Sancte Thomas of Canterbury for our fair city"—struck a panic to the hearts of the insurgents.

Lord Walter de Windsor and the mediciner soon understood how matters stood outside; and Lady Alice, springing down from the banister of the stairs, exhorted them to clear the hall. The insurgents were about three thousand in number, and of these nearly a hundred were in the hall; but, though they scarcely numbered a score, the adherents of Lord Walter, when assured that they had allies at hand, did not hesitate to charge. Headed by their illustrious leader, and animated by the cheering exclamations of his beautiful wife, they dashed impetuously forward, and the rabble, being attacked on every side, and having no way open for retreat, lost all spirit of resistance. In vain the cry for

quarter was raised, in vain the rebel crouched before the upraised axe, when Lady Alice, who had proved herself a heroine, shewed that she was a woman also.

"De Windsor! have you turned bloodhound?" she cried, as she arrested her husband's uplifted arm. "Has chivalry become a butcher's craft? And ye, all of ye, hold!" she cried to the partisans. "Would you strike such pitiful, crouching cowards as these? Let them pass!"

"The citizens are without, gracious lady," cried the terrified mob.

"I will bear your commands, lady, to the citizen captain," said the mediciner, shocked at the sanguinary rage of the victors.

The insurgents expressed their gratitude in cheers, and made a passage to the door for the mediciner, who succeeded in reaching the side of Master Cottle.

"I can't listen to such a Christian doctrine, Sir Mediciner," said Master Cottle. "But, to oblige Lady Alice, I'll give the dogs a hundred yards headway, so that they may have a chance."

"You are in a passion now," said the mediciner. "For God's sake, shew mercy!"

"I was never in a passion in my life," replied Master Cottle. "By Venus and Cupid! was I? But, as thou speakest so earnestly, I will only disperse them. Let them disperse straight."

Master Cottle accordingly drew back his troop, and, to their great surprise and discontent, ordered them to refrain from the shedding of blood, which a learned Jew, he said, had declared to be a violation of the Christian religion. After some time, having succeeded in dispersing the mob, he returned with his troop to the Tun, on Cornhill, where, having divided the greater part of them into patrols of four or five, and, among others, dismissed Dick and Master Simon, he usurped the headborough's easy chair, and disposed himself for sleep.

The mediciner did not depart, that night, from the residence of Lord Walter de Windsor. He was so earnestly solicited by Lady Alice to remain, that though he longed to embrace his daughter once more, he could not refuse. His presence greatly encouraged the weary garrison, and his council was of material service to Lord Walter, who, in anticipation of another attack, caused a barricade to be erected before the door, and made other defences, which, however, subsequent events did not render necessary.

CHAPTER IX.—THE KING.

OF THE MANNER IN WHICH HIS HIGHNESS KING RICHARD THE SECOND ENCOUNTERED THE REBELS, AND OF THE LOYAL BEARING OF DICK WHITTINGTON.

THE next morning shed the joyous splendour of summer over a tumultuous and mob-ruled land. Red-handed anarchy and blatant rebellion, sated with the blood which they had drunk during the night, paused to breathe; but while many a lovely and high-born dame mourned the loss of her lord or her honour—while many an aged and venerable man bewailed the assassination of his hopeful son—while many a proud noble sighed over the ruins of his fathers' halls, or wept over the corpses of his innocent babes, or fled, affrighted, from the daggers of his own vassals—while the churchman prayed, the warrior quaked, and even the king's mother, invaded in the sanctity of her bed-chamber, was grossly insulted by a handful of armed ruffians; and, while menaced with their sacrilegious daggers, obliged to submit to the pollution of their kisses—while rapine was rampant, religion defunct, and royalty a bauble, history records that there were two hearts that betrayed not a qualm of fear; and those two hearts, to whose manly energy even the present generation owe a grateful plaudit, animated the King of England and the Mayor of London. The former was but a boy in years; the latter, a simple merchant; the one was deserted by his nobles, the other, more fortunate, was supported by the chief citizens.

But it is not Richard's manly fortitude, his daring intrepidity, his royal clemency;—it is not his manifestation of these qualities, high and princely as they are, (and which the sad tale of his cruel deposition and barbarous regicide thrust into bold relief,) that excite our wonder; for they were only natural in the Christian king and the son of the Black Prince. The profound policy which, when age was palsied with fear, characterized the conduct of the regal boy—his cool determination; the fearless eloquence of his speech; his quick perception, and instant seizure of favouring circumstances;—

it is the remembrance of these that, when they hear the catastrophe of his life, and reflect on the barbarity and perjury of his successor, calls a loyal tear to the eye of posterity—and such a tear does honour to Englishmen and to human kind!

Having previously despatched a messenger to Jack Cade, the leader of the Essex insurgents, soliciting a conference, the king, accompanied by the Mayor of London and about a hundred horsemen (chiefly knights and citizens), proceeded to Mile-end, where Jack Cade's followers were encamped. The latter persons, amazed at the courage, and affected by the condescension, of their king, received him with joyous shouts; and on his promising to forward them a royal charter, which should secure them their original, and invest them with many new privileges, quietly dispersed to their respective homes. The king then returned to the city; and, after consulting with the mayor, sent a messenger to Wat Tyler also, inviting him to a conference. But that arrogant traitor, unwilling to relinquish the position to which his treason had elevated him, refused the gracious invitation; for "he was determined to drive off the king and his counsell (because he was of greater force than they) with cavils and shifts till the next daie, that in the night following he might the more easilie compass his resolution, which was, having all the poorer sort of the citie on his side, to have spoiled the citie, and to set fire in four corners of it, killing first the king and the lords that were about him. But HE that resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble, would not permit the ungratious devises of this naughtie and lewd lord to take place." He sent word to the king that, before there could be any peace between them, "he must put to death all lawyers, escheaters, and others that had to do with the law; for his meaning was, that having made all those away that understood the lawes, all things should then be ordered according to the will and disposition of the common people. It was reported, indeed, that he should say (with great pride) the day before these things chanced, putting his hand to his lips, that in four daies all the lawes of England should come forth of his mouth."

A second messenger was sent to the stubborn and obdurate rebel, stating that, since he would not attend the king, the king would attend him; and Smithfield, which was Wat Tyler's headquarters, was named as the place of meeting. "Here," says Fitzstephen, "every Friday, unless it be a solemn bidden holyday, is a notable show of horses to be sold. Earls, barons, knights, and citizens, repair thither to see or to buy. There may you of pleasure see amblers pacing it delicately; there may you see trotters, fit for men-at-arms, setting more hardly; there may you have notable young horses, not yet broken; may you have strong steeds, which the buyers do especially regard for pace or swiftness."

Having arrived at Smithfield, and taken his stand opposite to

the rebels, the king sent Sir John Newton, a cavalier of distinction, to desire Wat Tyler, who stood close by, to draw nearer.

"Darest thou to address me with thy head covered?" replied Wat Tyler, fiercely. "I will have thy head off, sirrah, if thou dost not unbonnet."

"Vile ribald!" said Sir John, "I would rather spit my tongue in thy face than give thee even a courteous word."

"Dog!" roared Wat Tyler, raising his rapier.

"Hold, sirs!" cried the king, who was within hearing of what had passed. "And you, Sir John, remove your beaver. You are in my presence, you know. Bold man," he continued, addressing Wat Tyler, "approach your king!"

Wat Tyler, under the influence of an involuntary impulse, moved forwards; but instead of removing his bonnet, or paying the slightest mark of respect to his sovereign, he turned his back to him, and, pointing to the rebellious multitude, said, "That is the king that I acknowledge—the sovereignty of the people."

"Sire," said the Mayor of London, "will your highness permit such discourse as this?"

"What am I to do, faithful Walworth?" replied the king, handling the hilt of his sword.

"Command his arrest," said the mayor, boldly.

"Foul and damned dog!" cried Wat Tyler, "darest thou speak of arresting me?"

"I command him to attach thee, traitor!" replied the king.

Wat Tyler drew his rapier, and raised it over the king's head, but, before he could strike, the mayor sprang forwards, and, smiting him with his heavy mace, knocked him from his horse. At the same moment "John Standish, an esquier, and divers more of the king's servants, drew their swords, and thrust him through in divers parts of his bodie."

"Our captain is traitorously slain," shouted the mob, perceiving the condition of their leader. "Let us stand together, and die with him. Let us shoot, and revenge his death manfullie"

"The king, shewing both hardihood and wisdom at that instant, more than his age required (he was in his 16th year), set spurs to his horse, and rode to them, saying:—'What is the matter, my men? What mean you? Will you shoot at your king? Be not troubled nor offended at the death of a traitor and ribald! Follow me into the fields, and you shall have all that you can desire.'"

"Hold, sire! prithee, hold!" cried the mayor, detaining the king.

"We will have life for life," shouted the mob, levelling their bows. "You have traitorously slain our leader."

"Shoot at me, then!" replied the king.

"Let's hear what he has to say," cried some of the mob, awed by the king's undaunted bearing.

"Prithee, your highness, trust them not," implored the mayor.

"Get thee gone, my trusty Walworth," returned the king; "'tis my last expedient. Commend me, I prithee, to my poor mother; and take thy king's benediction for thyself."

The mayor looked in the face of the regal speaker; and as he turned away, and the big tears rolled down his cheek, it suddenly occurred to him that he would once more endeavour to raise the citizens. While, therefore, the king, almost unattended, pushed in among the multitude, the mayor clapped spurs to his horse, and galloped off to the city.

Meanwhile, affairs in the city had begun to assume a more promising aspect. The intrepid deportment of the king, and the quiet manner in which he had dispersed the Essex insurgents, had awakened the principal citizens to a sense of their own power; and several of the nobility, who had blocked themselves up in their mansions, began to appear abroad, and to meditate a union of their forces.

At this crisis, Hob Carter, one of Wat Tyler's lieutenants, entered Cheapside, attended by about five thousand men, whom he brought to a halt at Cheapside Cross. Finding the street deserted, and all the shops closed, he ordered one of his minions to summon the denizens forth, and threatened, if they did not obey, to fire the city. None, however, paid any attention to this threat; and Hob Carter, enraged at their contumacy, forthwith ordered the work of destruction to commence. The doors of many of the houses were soon forced. The inmates—men, women, and children, were dragged forth, and, amidst the exulting yells of the spectators, carried to the adjacent scaffold, where they were indiscriminately butchered. The gutters of the street ran with human blood; the shrieks of the women, as they were led to the place of execution, or, previous to their decapitation, exposed to the barbarous insults of the inhuman rabble; the cries of infants, torn from the bosoms of their frantic mothers, or haply roused from some dream of heaven, to have their brains dashed out on the pavement, or their little hearts pierced with gory poniards; the last prayers of aged and venerable citizens, as they bared their necks to the ruthless axe, and washed the bloody block with their tears, would have instilled a chivalrous spirit into the heart of a coward.

It was while these dire events were in progress, that some of the chief citizens began to muster at the Tun, on Cornhill. Master Cottle had remained there throughout the previous night, and, early in the morning, had exerted himself to re-assemble his troop. For reasons which have already been explained, and which had elevated him to the titular dignity of "king of the bucks," Master Cottle possessed greater influence with the young men of the city than did the mayor himself, and on the present occasion, when the authority of the latter seemed to be defunct, he enforced his influence with the most absolute and peremptory

commands. His staff—constituted by Dick, Simon Racket, Fitz-warren, and the mediciner—were as active and resolute as himself; and the consequence was, as Master Simon Racket observed, that their perseverance accomplished many things, and placed their troop on a most respectable footing. Towards noon, indeed, Master Cottle had mustered nearly a hundred horsemen, whom he was forming into order before the Tun, and exhorting to vindicate the integrity of the laws, when a scout apprised him of the state of matters in Cheapside.

“Citizens,” cried Master Cottle, with unusual vehemence, “the rebels have fired Cheapside. They have massacred the aged and helpless; and plundered the widow and orphan. Are you terrified at their numbers? Do you doubt the providence of Heaven? Will you, at a word, follow your leader?”

A loud and unanimous “Ay,” burst from the assembly.

“Forward, then!” vociferated Master Cottle. “Sancte Thomas to the rescue!”

The whole troop were instantly in motion; and with their naked rapiers in their right hands, and the war-cry of their native city on their lips, they dashed into Cheapside. As they galloped along, shouting their war-cry at the pitch of their voices, the casements of the houses on either side were thrown open, and many an anxious face thrust out to review them. The shout of “Sancte Thomas to the rescue!” chorused by so many gallant hearts, seemed to electrify the hitherto inert citizens; and while the females raised their hands and voices to Heaven, and prayed for their success, the men betook themselves to their weapons, and sallied forth to the Tun. Hither Lord Walter de Windsor had now arrived, followed by about twenty partisans, three of whom were mounted. His lordship was soon joined by the Earl of Hereford, Sir Herbert de Pye, Master Henry Sinclair, Hubert Cromwell, the gaunt falconer, and about fifty partisans, armed to the teeth. Parties of four or five, attended by a trumpeter, were dispatched into every street in the eastern section of the city; and the trumpeter, after he had blown an alarum, or, as it is technically termed, the assembly-call, summoned the citizens forth to the Tun, whither, he said, “all true lieges were straight to hasten in arms.”

In the meantime, the insurgents in Cheapside were perpetrating the most extravagant excesses. Not content with stripping the marts of the merchants who resided in that locality of their costly wares, and appropriating the golden spoil to themselves, they tossed the domestic furniture from the casements into the centre of the street, and, having accumulated it in heaps, set it on fire. Casks of ale and wine were then hoisted from the cellars of the unhappy denizens, most of whom had fallen beneath the axe or the sword; and the rebels, satiated with blood, and fatigued with the labour of crime, hurried on to intoxication.

It was a scene for the painter, not the historian, to portray. The wild and ferocious countenances of the rebels, smeared with blood, and blackened with smoke and grime; their uncouth and varied figures, rude, but picturesque attire, and novel and dripping weapons; the bloody hands which, after they had quaffed their intoxicating draught, they drew over their bearded lips; the fires in the centre of the street; the streaming scaffold; the desecrated cross; the casks whence wine and ale flowed into the crimson gutters; the corpses that lay stiffening in the sun; the occasional groups who, under the influence of wine, were already quarrelling among themselves—these features formed a tableau which the painter might embody, but which the pen cannot describe.

There rose a sudden cry of terror, a shout of rescue, a tramp of cavalry, a neighing of steeds, a blowing of horns; and, surprised and dismayed, the rebels rushed to the side of their leader. Hob Carter knew well that he could not hope to make a stand against cavalry; and, therefore, as Master Cottle and his force drew nigh, he turned his horse's head, and, plunging his spurs into the animal's side, endeavoured to make good his own retreat. But this his followers would not suffer.

"Hold him!—the dastard!" cried a hundred voices. "Give him up to the worshipful citizens!"

"On them, my hearts!" shouted Master Cottle to his men. "Let our watchword be 'revenge!'"

"Hold, masters!" vociferated a horseman, as he pushed his steed through the panic-stricken insurgents. "On to Smithfield, and aid the king! Wat Tyler is slain!"

"Three cheers for our brave mayor!" cried Master Cottle; and, while the citizens responded in three hearty cheers, a buzz of terror arose from the insurgents.

Preceded by Master Cottle and Dick, who opened the way with their swords, the citizens pushed on to Smithfield; and the mayor, in the hope that he might be able to raise the entire city, galloped on to Cornhill. Nearly six hundred armed men, including many noblemen and knights, had now congregated in the area round the Tun; and auxiliaries, many of whom were mounted, were continually pouring in. Before this array, the mayor drew up, and (to quote the words of Hollinshed) addressed them thus:—

"Oh, ye good and virtuous citizens! come forth, out of hand, and help your king, ready to be slain; and help me, your mayor, standing in the same peril; or if ye will not help me, for some faults committed by me against you, yet forsake not your king, but help and succour him in his present danger.'"

The tears ran down the good man's cheeks as he delivered this simple and pathetic oration, which drew tears from many of his audience; but the shout of "Lead us on!" that issued from every mouth, and the forest of weapons that rose in the air, turned his grief into loyal transport.

"Follow!" he shouted; and, turning his horse's head, he preceded the citizens to the rescue of their king.

The latter august personage was, indeed, in a perilous situation; but though his attendants did not number twenty, and he and they were surrounded by an infuriate multitude, his courage and decision suffered no abatement. Undaunted by their yells, and exposing his person to their levelled darts, he rode in among them, and desired to be made acquainted with their demands.

"Wherefore, my good subjects," he cried, "do ye appear thus in arms? Beshrew the day, I say, that ribalds and traitors led my true lieges against their poor prince!"

"Whom call ye ribalds and traitors?" demanded one of the ringleaders.

"Thou, and such as thou," cried Sir John Newton, pushing forward his steed.

"Beshrew thy heart, thou lying tyrant!" cried the other, "I will have thy life."

"Well said, stout Whittington!" shouted several of the rabble.

"Nay, hold, sirrah!" said the king, interposing his steed between Sir John and Whittington, both of whom had raised their rapiers. "If ye dare strike against my bidding, both of ye are traitors. Put up your rapier, Sir John; and run us not into further difficulty."

"Stand aside, proud boy!" cried Whittington, "and thrust not thy vain authority between armed men. Stand aside, I say!"

"Beseech your highness," implored Sir John Newton, "let me chastise this presumptuous ribald."

"Stand aside!" cried Whittington to the king; and several other ringleaders, pushing up to the front, echoed, "Stand aside!"

"Close round his highness, gallants!" cried Sir John Newton, raising his heavy battle-axe as he pushed before the king.

The king's attendants, following the example of Sir John, gathered round their august master; and the rebel ringleaders, thinking that they were about to cut a passage through the throng, also sprang forwards; but at this instant Master Cottle and his troop galloped into the field.

"Treachery! treachery!" cried the elder Whittington.

Before he could speak another word, Sir John Newton attacked him, and the remainder of the king's servants, emboldened by the vicinity of succour, rushed on the other ringleaders. In vain the king commanded them to desist; and just as Master Cottle, at the head of his troop, attained the spot, Sir John Newton clove the skull of the elder Whittington in twain.

"God!" ejaculated Master Simon, "he has slain Dick's father."

"Which is my father?" cried Dick.

"Rescue! rescue for the king!" shouted the mediciner, shaking his arm.

“My father! my father!” groaned Dick.

But he was hurried on into the thick of the fight, where, though torn with conflicting emotions, and suffering the most acute anguish, he was obliged, in self-preservation, to bestir himself; and it may as well be observed here, since it is probable that another opportunity will not occur, that he never discovered the body of his unhappy parent, who, as he deserved, died the death of the traitor. His fall, however, seemed likely to be the prelude to a greater effusion of blood. A rumour was spread among the multitude, whom the arrival of Master Cottle’s troop had intimidated, that the Duke of Lancaster, who was then in Scotland, was marching thither with a large army, and that he had sworn to exterminate them all. Resolved to sell their lives as dearly as they could, yet not knowing how to proceed, they gathered round their ringleaders, and waited the attack of the royal party, whom, as soon as he could make himself heard, the king had ordered to refrain from violence.

“What is that shouting?” asked the king of Sir John Newton.

“God grant your highness long life!” replied Sir John. “Here are your good lieges come to your aid.”

And as Sir John spoke, and a cry of terror arose from the insurgents, nearly a thousand armed men appeared in sight. The next moment William Walworth, the mayor, galloped up to the king.

“My faithful liege!” cried the king, extending his hand.

“My sovereign lord!” said Walworth, as he kissed the king’s hand. “God save thee, sire! The rebels are blocked in. All the outlets from the field are securely guarded. What is your further pleasure, mighty Sir?”

“My further pleasure,” said the king, “is to reward thee, and, in rewarding thee, to raise a memorial of thy loyalty for ever. Henceforth, citizens, your mayor shall be called LORD MAYOR; and the first who bears that dignity is the faithfulest sir that king ever had.” He raised his sword as he spoke, and striking William Walworth on the back, continued:—“Hail, Sir William Walworth, banneret, FIRST LORD MAYOR OF LONDON!”

An involuntary spasm crept over Dick’s frame:—*he remembered the prediction of Old Bow Bells.*

“And now,” continued the king, addressing the insurgents, “we pardon all of ye, our poor, deluded subjects. Haste ye away to your homes. Harken not again to the evil council of ribalds and traitors, for ye see no good comes of such doings. Our parliament, whom we will straightway summon, shall be advertised of your grievances, and, holpen by their wisdom, we will redress them. Get ye away, now, from our city!”

“God save king Richard!” cried ten thousand voices; and amidst the acclamations of his subjects, and attended by a guard

of noble gentlemen, the king quitted the field, and hastened to the presence of his mother.

Dick remained to assist in the dispersion of the mob, who, in due course, were entirely cleared from the city. It was morning when he returned to the house of his master, whither, during the night, persons had arrived, of whom some account will be furnished in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER X.—THE MICE.

WHAT FELL OUT IN THE KINGDOM OF ALGIERS, WHITHER THE GOOD SHIP "UNICORN" HAD SAILED.

THE voyage of the bark "Unicorn" was unvaried by any incident deserving of remark till it had passed through the Straits into the Mediterranean sea. Master Cobbs then kept to the coast of Spain, not only to avoid the Algerine corsairs, who then abounded in that sea, but for the purpose of carrying on a traffic with the Spaniards, which he did with advantage. At length he reached Cape de Gatte—a locality, he it observed, that seamen never mention without a curse—and here, like most people, he was becalmed. Nearly a month elapsed, during which the scurvy made its appearance on board, and not a breath of wind ruffled the sea. There lay the good ship "Unicorn," within a dozen miles of the shore, which raised its lofty black head into mid air—there she lay, broiling in the summer sun, with the clear, cerulean sky above, and the black-blue ocean around ; and when, at night—such nights as they have there!—the weary mariner turned his sickly eye on the shore, where little dots of light, scattered here and there over the face of the mountain, gleamed like stars,—when the heavy ship rolled in the dead calm, and incipient disease convulsed his breast and tongue, then he would think of home—of bonny old England—and its fogs and firesides.

One midnight, after they had been nearly a month in the situation specified, two persons were pacing the deck of the rolling bark. One of them, whose appearance had not the slightest characteristic of the seaman, was a short, portly person, whose wrinkled face bespoke a vicinity to his sixtieth year. He had once, one would have inferred from his features, been a comfortable sort of person, and there was still a scintillation of humour in his eye, though corrected, in a way that cannot be described, by a timidity of glance, which might indicate a tame spirit.

"Pleasant place this, Master Cobbs," he said, addressing the person with whom he was walking. "It's a pity one doesn't feel comfortable."

"There are slight puffs of wind now and then," returned Master Cobbs; "and I hope, before morning, to make a good offing."

"We will need to be soon among the Moors," said the other. "The crew are touched with this cursed scurvy; and, by'r Lady, I begin to fear for myself."

"You fear, Williams?" rejoined Master Cobbs; "nay, nay, gossip, you are purveyor; and while there is a draught of canary aboard, I doubt not that you will drown fear."

"I' faith," replied Master Williams, "I begin to fancy that the canary will not last till we reach port. But, holy dome!" he continued, halting abruptly, "here comes the wind at last."

"Thank Heaven!" cried Cobbs, "the wind is indeed rising."

Roused from their decumbent posture by this news, ever the most welcome to a sailor's ear, three of the crew, who had been laying down on the deck, sprang to their feet, and, in obedience to Master Cobbs' orders to that effect, hastened to trim the sails. The ship was soon moving, at the rate of two or three knots an hour; and as the lights aforementioned receded from the sight, and the black outline of the coast became less distinct, the inspired mariners gave three feeble cheers. Towards morning, however, the wind lulled, and at daylight the Unicorn was again becalmed.

"That ship looks suspicious," remarked Master Cobbs, as he and Williams ascended to the deck at daylight, and discovered a sail at some distance astern.

"But you can have no fear of the corsairs?" returned Williams.

"Not if I were bound homeward," replied Master Cobbs, "for then I would have a pass from the Dey of Algiers. Nevertheless, as I am open to an attack till I reach Algiers, I should like to avoid them at present."

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Master Williams, "they are becalmed as well as we."

"Ay," cried Cobbs, with his eyes fixed on the stranger sail; "but mark you not the bustle that prevails on board? I' faith, they are lowering their boats."

"Then we must need surrender," returned Williams.

"Nay," said Cobbs, "we will sell our lives as dearly as we can. Death before slavery. Is't not so, my hearts?" he added, addressing his crew, who, anxious to hear his opinion of the suspicious craft, had congregated round him.

"We'll fight to the last, noble captain!" they shouted unanimously.

Just as the crew thus expressed their determination, and hastened to arm themselves, four boats were lowered from the vessel astern,

which straightway displayed the crescented flag in her mizen. There was now no doubt of its piratical character, and some of Master Cobbs' men were taking leave of each other, and others, less hardy, were offering a maiden petition to Heaven, when the boats of the strange ship were suddenly hoisted up again.

"All hands shorten sail!" cried Master Cobbs, who, though he had been watching the proceedings of the pirate, detected a white vapour on the horizon, which appearance, as he had been in those waters before, he knew to be portentous.

Before the pirate, who had also noticed this precursor of a squall, could take in his canvas, the squall had reached him; and splitting his mainsail into tatters, and bending his rakish masts like reeds, it drove his vessel at a furious rate over the agitated sea. Almost at the same moment it reached the Unicorn, which, though her sails were all furled, sped like a feather before it. The masts seemed ready to go by the board; and several of the minor spars, though of stout Norway fir, snapped in the centre. Away dashed the good ship Unicorn! Mountain after mountain, trough after trough—she rushed on, over and down, pitching and tossing, now ascending to the sky and then diving to the deep, yet, as a well-trained steed obeys the rein of its rider, yielding her strength to the hand of the helmsman. The squall, as frequently happens in the Mediterranean, turned to a furious gale, which lasted throughout the succeeding night. Towards morning, however, the weather became more calm; and the wind, which, though it had considerably abated, still continued fresh, veered round to a favourable point.

"There is that infernal corsair again," cried Master Cobbs, as the rising sun spread its lustre over the orient. "She is on our lee-bow just now; and, by my faith, she will soon be up with us.

"I wish we were once more off that eternal Cape," ejaculated Master Williams, with chattering teeth. "Howbeit, since we must fight, let's to it, my hearts!"

And Master Williams, watching his opportunity, stole down the companion-ladder, and repaired straightway to the ship's hold, where, in company with Dick's cat, who had the guardianship of that sub-marine locality, he stowed himself away.

The corsair, almost as soon as Master Cobbs espied her, made all sail, and bore down on the Unicorn. The latter, though a fast vessel, soon shewed her inability to race with such a rakish-built ship as the corsair, who, to use the language of seamen, "walked round her," and thus overhauled her capabilities of resistance. She then bore up alongside, and her captain, who stood with a speaking trumpet on her quarter-deck, hailed Master Cobbs in Italian, though lingua Franca was then, as it is still, the general medium of communication between Europeans and Moors.

"*Che bastimento è quello, è dove va?*" vociferated the corsair, as his ship rushed past.

He was almost out of hearing before Master Cobbs could reply—" *L' Unicorn, che parti per Algiero.*"

Again, however, he bore up alongside, and while Master Cobbs and his crew leaned over the bulwarks, in expectation that he would again hail them, he poured a whole broadside into the Unicorn. Under cover of the smoke, and the amazement which his unexpected treachery occasioned, he lowered two boats, filled with armed men, who, while he sailed round to the lee-bow of the Unicorn, and discharged another broadside, boarded her on the weather-quarter, unperceived by the crew. The struggle was desperate but brief; and Master Cobbs and seven of his crew, who were all that survived, were soon driven beneath the hatches, which were instantly fastened down. The corsairs then altered the Unicorn's course, which had been S.E., and steered S.S.E., for Bergia, of which port, having the wind right aft throughout the passage, they came in sight on the following evening.

It was nearly dark, however, before the castle, which stands at the extremity of the mole of the harbour, could be distinguished as a landmark, and Master Cobbs, who, with his compatriots, had been brought on deck, and laden with manacles, perceived that the corsairs were half-inclined to stand out to sea again. But the moon rose in Ionian splendour, and, no longer apprehensive of stumbling on the shoals which there abound, the corsairs stood into the capacious bay. They passed the strong castle, which, till England's wooden walls appeared before it, was considered impregnable; and made straight for the mouth of the silvery Major, where they anchored.

Master Cobbs stood in the gangway, with his hands manacled, and his feet inclosed in fetters; but, dejected and forlorn though he was, he could not help rising above material existence, and likening his term of probation to the revolutions of a dream, as he gazed on the quiescent scene around. And when you are standing alone beneath the calm light of an African moon, and looking on an African mountain and bay and town, there will insensibly steal over you an indifference to the brightest prospects of life, and the spirit of love, and of faith in the God of love, will elevate you above the vicissitudes of fortune, and place you beyond the grapple of sorrow. And thus it fell with Master Cobbs—"the English patrician and the Christian slave!"

"Ho you!" said the chief corsair, as the ship came to anchor. "You were the captain of this vessel?"

"Ay," replied Cobbs.

"You are now a slave," grinned the corsair. "Knock off his fetters," he added, addressing one of his men; "but leave his manacles on. Then, toss him and his men into the boat."

A boat was lowered, and Master Cobbs and his surviving crew, including the timid Williams, were tossed into it, when Dick's cat, who, as all animals invariably do on ship-board, had become re-

markably familiar with her old entertainers, sprang from the gangway on to Master Cobbs' shoulders. This incident raised a laugh among the corsairs, who did not seem to be versed in the natural history of the agile quadruped, and when Master Cobbs pulled her down from his shoulders, and folded her in his arms, they offered him no interruption. The captives, that night, were lodged in the prison of the town; and on the next morning, after they had been paraded in the market, were disposed of to an agent of the dey, and removed to Constantina.

The dey, though he rarely visited that city, had a palace and garden in Constantina; and in this garden, exposed to the scorching sun of Africa, Master Cobbs and his comrades passed the entire day. At night they were lodged together in a dormitory, of which their taskmaster kept the key, and their disposition, they thought, was so far fortunate, as besides the comfort which they derived from each other, Dick's cat was their fellow-prisoner, and, though the country swarmed with rats and mice, she zealously defended them against muscicular invasion. Their taskmaster, too, soon began to relax the severity of his rule, particularly to Master Cobbs, whom he seldom suffered to undergo toil; but week after week, month after month, year after year, passed away, and they were still slaves. One evening, when their captivity had endured about six years, Master Cobbs was beckoned aside by the taskmaster, who led him into a secluded part of the garden. He was one of the Biscaris, or a native of Zaab, a district behind Mount Atlas, which people, during the rule of the deys, were frequently employed in offices of trust by the Algerine government.

"Signore," he said, "I have often thought you and I have met before. Were you ever in Algiers?"

"Ay," replied Cobbs, "I was some time a slave, and, afterwards a friend, of the dey, Selim Pacha."

The Biscari elevated his eyebrows and hands. "And think you the dey has forgotten you?"

"Nay," cried Cobbs, "I think otherwise. But he never comes hither; I may grow old in slavery before I encounter him."

"Fear not," replied the Biscari, after a pause. "We will fly together to-night. I will be your guide. Signore, be ready to depart when I summon you forth."

They parted; and Master Cobbs, without imparting the subject to any one of his fellow-captives, waited anxiously for the Biscari's coming. At length, about midnight, he heard the key turned in the door of the dormitory, and proceeding thither on tip-toe, was greeted with a cordial grasp by the Biscari, who straightway led him forth.

They came out on a gallery before the house, whence they descended a flight of wooden stairs, leading to the back court of the palace. This part of the building, which was occupied by the wives of deceased deys, was held sacred by the natives; and

to be found there at that hour, or, indeed, at any hour, would have been considered a capital crime. It was well guarded by the functionaries of the seraglio ; and a company of Turkish soldiers, to whom the custody of the rest of the palace was consigned, were within hail. Our fugitives, however, stole along, without interruption, in the shadow of the main building, and at length arrived at a low wall, bounding one side of the court. Master Cobbs, being the tallest, stooped down, in order that the Biscari might mount from his back to the top of the wall, and the latter person had just sprung on his back, and clutched the summit of the wall with his right hand, when two Turkish soldiers rushed forth from behind an adjacent buttress. Quick as light the Biscari drew a long knife from his vest, and, springing down from the wall, he toppled over one of the Turks, whom, as they struggled on the ground, he thrust through the heart. Master Cobbs, though unarmed, encountered the other, from whose first onset he skipped aside ; but his energies, which his age and hard life had materially weakened, were no match for those of his adversary, and he was just falling when he was rescued by the Biscari. Before the Turk could turn round the Biscari's knife had rendered him powerless.

The fugitives now resumed their purpose of climbing the wall, which they soon cleared, and alighted in the stable yard. This was not inclosed, and but carelessly guarded, as it was without the precincts of the palace ; but they still crept along in the shadow of the wall, whence they did not emerge till they reached the stables. The Biscari opened one of the stables with a master-key, which unlocked all the outhouses, and which he possessed in virtue of his office as taskmaster ; and they entered together. They chose two steeds, whom, as the Biscari knew where to look for the harness, they had no difficulty in equipping ; and having led them out, they set forth on their journey.

They travelled on till dawn, when, as they fancied that they were beyond the reach of pursuit, they paused to refresh their horses. In a short time, however, they resumed their journey ; and after four hours' hard riding, though the distance was nearly thirty miles, arrived before the gates of the city of Algiers.

Just as they entered the city the dey was proceeding to the Bajazet mosque. Our fugitives, however, continued their journey up the street, being so excited by the peril of their situation, and so anxious to reach the palace of the dey, that they did not notice the soldiers who were shouting to them to stop. The soldiers, enraged at their seeming contumacy, seized them, when the Biscari, calling to their captain, demanded to be led before the dey, to whom, he declared, he had matter of moment to impart. At this moment the dey came in sight, and seeing the Biscari struggling with his guards, and being apprised of what that person had said, commanded him and Master Cobbs to be brought before him.

"Chief of the faithful !" cried the Biscari, springing from his

horse, and prostrating himself before the dey, "let thy mighty foot crush thy slave! But in yon Christian, O favourite of Allah! behold one that thou didst once call friend! He is now thy slave, for wondrous are the trials of man, and Allah, thy father, is great!"

Master Cobbs, who had dismounted directly the dey came in sight, now approached, and, kneeling on one knee before the dey, bent his head on his breast.

"High signore," he said, "behold in me the captive that you once franchised without ransom—the English noble, once more a slave." He raised his head as he continued "I am Sir Henry Sinclair, your highness."

The dey looked steadfastly in his face, as though he would recal long-forgotten features, and associate them with revived and pleasing reminiscences. "My brother! my brother!" he exclaimed at length, as he bowed down from his saddle, and threw his arms round the suppliant's neck. "Do I live to embrace thee once again? Allah is great!"

The dey looked once more in Master Cobbs's face, and then, having given orders that he should be led to the royal palace, and furnished with apparel befitting his real rank, proceeded to the mosque. As soon as he had performed his devotions he hastened back to his palace, and summoned Master Cobbs, who was now arrayed in princely attire, to attend him.

"Signore," he said, as Master Cobbs presented himself, "thou must need be weary. Refresh thyself, and, when we have finished our repast, thou canst tell me how thy late ills have chanced."

Master Cobbs expressed his grateful acknowledgments; and, in company with the dey and his principal officers, sat down to a sumptuous repast. No sooner, however, had the covers been removed from the several dishes, than, allured by the smell of the savoury viands, a multitude of mice rushed into the apartment, and, overturning a Mahomedan butler, dashed in among the dishes, which, according to Mussulman custom, were set out on the floor. To Master Cobbs' amazement, however, no serious uproar ensued, nor did the onset of the mice, however unbecoming, appear at all strange in the eyes of the court, for, as Master Cobbs afterwards discovered, the whole country was overrun with those rapacious animals; and "in one island," writes Doctor Wanley, in his elaborate History of Man, "the inhabitants were forced by rats and mice to fly away." The dey and his courtiers, nevertheless, did not remain quiescent; but springing to their feet, and drawing forth their scimitars, charged the invaders with considerable spirit. The perspiration streamed down his face as the dey, after the mice had been completely routed, again seated himself at his soup.

"I have an animal under my care," said Master Cobbs, "who would soon rid your highness of this annoyance."

The dey stared inquisitively in the speaker's face. "I know you for a man of truth," he said, at length. "I will have your ship restored to you, and your goods, even as they were brought hither; but if you have such a wondrous animal as this you speak of, and it be not above price, I will make you rich indeed."

"Were the brute mine, my lord," replied Cobbs, "I would accept nothing; but it belongs to a poor orphan, whose only possession it is."

"He shall be rich," exclaimed the dey. "But where is this noble beast?"

"It is now at Constantina, Signore," replied Master Cobbs, "at your palace, where my mariners are still in captivity."

The dey instantly directed a messenger to be dispatched to Constantina, with orders to the bey, or governor of the district, to liberate the English captives, and transmit them and their cat to Algiers. He then requested Master Cobbs, who had by this time finished his repast, to narrate the adventures that he had undergone since his last visit to Algiers; and both he and his officers, during the progress of the narrative, frequently raised their hands and eyes in mute wonder, and, when Master Cobbs had finished, simultaneously ejaculated, "Allah is great!"

The dey then dispatched some of his officers on different routes, to trace the corsair who had plundered and captured the Unicorn, and to enforce him to make restitution to Master Cobbs. The latter, meanwhile, waited anxiously for the return of the messenger who had been sent to Constantina. But the messenger did not return till the noon of the following day, when, together with Williams and the surviving crew, he presented himself at court.

Master Cobbs, who had gone forth to meet his old comrades, and had rescued Dick's cat from the custody of their escort, instantly repaired to the presence of the dey, who, on observing its proportions, began to doubt if the cat were really so formidable an enemy to mice as Master Cobbs represented. Several of his officers, whom he had summoned thither for the special purpose of shewing them the cat, shook their heads doubtfully; and some benevolent members of the divan, kindly considering that, notwithstanding the enormity that he had perpetrated in attempting to hoax them, Master Cobbs had basked in the rays of royal favour, whispered each other that his claims to be flayed alive would probably be commuted to the bow-string.

A sumptuous banquet, however, had been prepared; and the whole court, including Master Cobbs, proceeded with solemn faces to the dining-saloon, where, as on the day before, the banquet was laid out. Master Cobbs, having the cat in his arms, would not squat down, but stood erect by the side of the dey, who presided. The officers of the court sat in two parallel lines to the end of the apartment. Here a gallery had been erected, the front of which was formed of Venetian blinds, so that none of

the inmates, though they themselves could see all that passed below, could be observed from without ; and in this gallery the ladies of the court were admitted to view the spectacle beneath. When all things were arranged, and he had ascertained that Master Cobbs was quite ready, the dey ordered the covers of the dishes to be removed ; and straightway a host of mice rushed into the apartment.

The cat sprang from the arms of Master Cobbs, and the screams of the unhappy mice, as they instinctively fled from her presence, or, unable to evade her celerity of movement, fell beneath her piercing claws,—the screams of the unhappy mice (to quote the words of an Arabian poet who was present, and who commemorates their sufferings in an epic,) “made the welkin ring.” The dey threw his hands up in the air, and was mute ; his officers, raising their eyes to heaven, cried with one voice, “Allah is great !” and the ladies in the gallery, forgetting decorum, echoed back their cry.

Were the dey and his officers to maintain their gravity on so joyous an occasion ? They could not. They rushed round Master Cobbs, whose looks reproached them for their original incredulity, and almost stifled him with their embraces ; and so great was the enthusiasm of the court, that if they had not been restrained by the Venetian blinds and a sense of decorum, it is probable that the ladies in the gallery would also have embraced him.

Order, however, was at length established ; and then, taking Master Cobbs by the hand, the dey inquired the price of the victorious cat.

“Of your own goodness, mighty signore,” replied Master Cobbs, “you have had my vessel and the value of its cargo restored to me. How, then, can I accept further recompence ?”

“You said the cat belonged to an orphan,” returned the dey. “Do you render it up to me priceless ?”

“Surely, signore,” rejoined Cobbs.

“I give thee, then,” said the dey, “as a present for the orphan you speak of, twelve thousand zechins, which shall be paid thee directly, and a casket of pearls, valued at the same sum.”

Master Cobbs bent his knee, and kissed the dey’s hand ;—he could not utter his thanks.

The dey, however, raised him, and resumed :—“After thy long captivity, signore, thou must need be anxious to return home. If I yielded to my own desires, and sought not thy happiness, I should detain thee here some time ; but, knowing the secret wish of thy heart, I have had all things arranged for thy immediate departure. Thy bark is ready ; restitution has been made for thy losses, and thy mariners are now on shipboard. Tarry with me but this night, and to-morrow I will bid thee farewell.”

Master Cobbs waved his hand—for his emotion would not suffer him to speak—to signify his acceptance of the dey’s invitation, and his gratitude for his kindness. The court soon afterwards broke



The Cat's introduction at Court.

up, and Master Cobbs spent the remainder of the day with his host and a few of his chief officers. He did not forget the services of the kind-hearted Biscari, who had been the means of releasing him from bondage, but recommended him to the dey, who advanced him to a high office. The next morning Master Cobbs bade farewell to his princely entertainer, and embarked for the Unicorn, which, in addition to the survivors of her former crew, the dey had well manned with ransomed English captives. The wind was fair, and having settled all his affairs at Algiers, he weighed anchor; and after a favourable voyage, during which nothing of importance occurred, arrived safe in the river Thames.

CHAPTER XI.—THE DEATH-BED.

WHAT TRANSPIRED AT THE HOUSE OF LADY ALICE DE WINDSOR.

WHEN he had been released from duty, on the morning after the discomfiture of the insurgents, Dick hastened to the house of Master Fitzwarren. He was exceedingly fatigued, and disregarding the absence of Dame Williams, whose increasing years tended to asperate rather than soften her temper, he flung himself into a settle in a corner of the kitchen, and was soon asleep. He had not, however, been long in this situation, and consequently had obtained but little repose, when he was awakened by a loud noise, as of voices engaged in angry dispute. On opening his eyes, and discerning the cause of this disturbance, he could scarcely credit his senses.

In the centre of the room stood Master Williams—the veritable Master Williams, whom, on his first arrival in London, he had mistaken for a phantom, and, as was shown in a former part of this history, pursued down several streets. There he stood indeed, and there also stood his wife; and the uproar that had awakened Dick was owing to the warmth of their mutual greeting. Master Williams, however, was now a travelled man, and did not submit tamely to the hen-pecking propensities of his imperious dame. He had been among the Moors, and, as he justly observed, if those uncivilized persons could not only govern a plurality of wives, but reduce them to the most abject bondage, he did not see any particular reason why he, a Christian man, should not be able to rule one wife. He had only, like others, to assert his superiority, and evince a determination to uphold it, and, as he soon found, his spouse, after a little show of resistance, crouched at his feet.

Dick had started up to salute him, and with this intention was hurrying forward, when he heard a voice calling him,—“Master Whittington.”

Dick turned round hastily, vexed that any one should address him with such formality, and beheld Master Fitzwarren.

"I am the bearer of good news, Master Whittington," said the merchant. "I hasten——"

"You mock me, sir," replied Dick; "and, in mocking me, do yourself much wrong."

"You are a rich man, not the less," continued the merchant. "I give you joy of your good fortune, worthy sir."

"Is it really so?" cried Dick, struck with the earnestness of Master Fitzwarren's speech. "Art thou indeed earnest, good master?"

"Ay, am I," replied the merchant, taking Dick's hand, and clasping it in his own; "but retire with me, and I will make thee master of the particulars."

Accordingly, followed by Dick, Master Fitzwarren ascended the stairs, and led him to an upper chamber. There Dick found Master Cobbs, who, as he advanced to meet him, caught him in his arms, and blessed him. He then presented him to Hubert Cromwell, who, together with Master Henry, had arrived thither some moments previous.

"This is your sister's son," he said, as he presented Dick to Hubert. "His father is one Whittington."

"And does my nephew go in rags?" exclaimed Hubert, folding Dick in his arms.

"That heap of wealth is his," replied Cobbs, pointing to a sack in the centre of the room.

"I will return presently," said Hubert; and he quitted the room.

"Now, my son," said Master Cobbs to Dick, "sit down by me, and I will tell you what has chanced to change your fortunes." And pushing Dick into a seat beside him, and nodding to Master Fitzwarren to be seated, he related the particulars set forth in the preceding chapter of this history.

"How am I to thank you, my two benefactors?" cried Dick, addressing Fitzwarren and Cobbs, when the latter, having finished his narration, shewed him the presents which the dey had sent him. "And what can I do with all this wealth?"

"It grieves me," said Master Fitzwarren, "that I did not make you my apprentice; for, by this time, your servitude would have ceased, and I could make you my partner in trade."

"I have served an apprenticeship to Master Simon," cried Dick, eagerly, "and was bounden to him by regular indentures."

"This is fortunate," said Master Fitzwarren. "I will take out your freedom to-morrow, and, if you think well of it, will admit you to partnership."

"You are too generous," said Dick, with emotion.

"I' faith," returned Master Fitzwarren, "you may be LORD MAYOR yet."

A flush mounted to Dick's cheek, and he was about to speak, but at this moment Hubert Cromwell returned. He did not,

however, enter, but, opening the door sufficiently for the purpose, protruded his head into the room, and beckoned Dick out.

"Hither, my son," he cried, "for I have somewhat to discuss with you."

Dick instantly rose, and, proceeding into the passage without, followed Hubert into an adjacent bed-chamber. He was not a little surprised, on glancing round the room, to observe that the toilet table was set out for immediate use, and that several suits of clothes, befitting a young man of wealth and consequence, were strewn over the floor.

"Fit thyself quickly, my son," said Hubert, smiling at his surprise.

After trying several suits, which were either too large or too small, Dick found one which fitted him exactly; and this he straightway donned. He then dispatched his ablutions; and with the assistance of Hubert, who trimmed and arranged his hair, and otherwise assimilated his personal appearance with his apparel, completed his toilet. Even Hubert, who well knew the advantages of a pleasing mien and elegant attire, was surprised at the transformation which dress effected in Dick. He folded him in his arms; and as he dropped his head on his shoulder, and suffered the big tears to drip from his eyes, exclaimed, in broken accents:—"My poor, lorn, unhappy sister's child!"

"We have known each other some years, uncle," said Dick, "yet have we never once thought how dear we were to each other."

"Never," replied Hubert. "But let us forth."

They returned to the other chamber, in which, besides the party whom they had left there, they now found Mistress Alice and Miriam.

"Can this be our Dick?" cried the two young ladies together.

"Even so, fair ladies," replied Dick. "Such as you and kind fortune have made me."

He advanced to kiss their hands; and Hubert remarked that, while this courtesy was being enacted, Mistress Alice coloured to the eyes, and Miriam turned pale as death.

"You must be present at Alice's nuptials to-morrow," said Master Fitzwarren to Dick.

Dick bowed; and Hubert observed that his lips quivered. A few moments afterwards, thinking that his emotion had escaped notice, he quitted the room; and Hubert, who had been watching him intently, followed him. He overtook him in the passage, and, seizing him by the arm, led him forth. They did not speak a word till they reached the front of Leaden-Hall, when, as they turned to enter that edifice, the gaunt falconer ran out, and nearly overset them.

"What ails thee?" cried Hubert, as he grasped the falconer's arm.

"For the love of our Lady," cried the falconer, impatiently, "let me go!"

"Why, Sir Falconer, thou tremblest with fear!" replied Hubert. "What—"

"Oh, the faithless deceiver!" cried a woman, who now issued from the porch, and whom Dick immediately recognised for Dame Roaster, the cook. "Hold him, your worships! hold him sure!"

The falconer struggled hard, but Dick, divining the nature of his delinquencies, hastened to Hubert's assistance, and held him till the dame came up. A breach of promise of marriage was then clearly proved; and it was set forth, as an aggravation of this enormity, that the dame had been induced to quit her place, and, with the savings which she had accumulated during her servitude, to purchase the goodwill and fixtures of a certain eating-house in Cooks'-row, of which Fitzstephen says, that in his time it lay "on the river-side; it is a common cookery, or Cooks'-row, where daily, for the season of the year, men might have meat—roast, sod, or fried; fish, flesh, and fowls, fit for rich and poor." The dame expatiated on all the little delicacies which, as his palate was rather choice, she had at various times provided for him; and the obdurate falconer, it must need be owned, did seem ashamed, and looked downward like a person who was really guilty. By the advice of Hubert, however, he reiterated his promise of marriage, and as the nuptials were fixed for an early day, walked away with the dame to settle the preliminaries.

Dick and Hubert passed on into the garden of Leaden-Hall, and proceeded to the arbour, before noticed, at its extremity.

"What frets thee, my dear son?" asked Hubert, as he took Dick's hand, and looked inquiringly in his face.

"I love her," replied Dick, looking downwards.

"Whom?"

"Alice Fitzwarren," said Dick. "I pray you, as you bear me affection, suffer me to journey hence for a day or two. My heart would break were I present at her nuptials."

Hubert pressed his hand affectionately. "Remain here, then, with me," he replied.

Whoever has been plunged suddenly into profound and passive sorrow, which seems to press for efflux against the sides of the temples and the shield of the eyes (and they who have known sorrow will recal this sensation)—whoever has felt a closeted grief ticking in the breast, as if it were struggling to start forth, and was restrained by fetters that were both invisible and imaginary—whoever has been thus afflicted (and who has not?) will know how sweet it is to have the bursting heart unlocked by the key of sympathy, when, without restraint, its tears and its complaints gush forth together. And thus it was with Dick, when the only relation that he had in the world—the only one that was bounden to him by the ties of blood and nature, poured sympathy into his ear.

In the meantime, Master Cobbs, or, as the chronicler will hence-

forth call him, Sir Henry Sinclair, and his son Master Henry, had sallied forth from Fitzwarren's, and bent their steps towards Leaden-Hall. As they passed up the street they encountered Master Simon Racket, who, on perceiving that person, caught Sir Henry Sinclair by the hand, and welcomed him home.

"But I was seeking your son," he added. "You recollect Dame Alice Perrers, my lord?"

"Ay! What of her?" cried the others together.

"She is now dying!" replied Master Simon. "She wishes to see Master Henry once more. Will you come?"

"God deny us else," cried Sir Henry Sinclair.

They walked at their quickest pace towards the residence of Lady Alice de Windsor. Lady Alice, on the night that the insurgents attacked her house, had exerted herself so much, and had so exposed her delicate and susceptible frame to cold, that on the following morning she was unable to rise, and a short time after became delirious. Her indisposition became more serious; and when the mediciner, on the dispersion of the rebels, hastened to her assistance, she was beyond the influence of medical skill. The mediciner, foreseeing her early decease, instantly quitted her, and proceeded in search of a clergyman. He knew the residence of one whom he thought to be in the lady's confidence; and thither, unknown to Lord Walter, he hastened, and requested his immediate attendance. But Lord Walter, anxious to soothe the last moments of his wife, and thinking that she would wish to be reconciled to the Romish church, with which, throughout her political life, she had been at enmity, sent one of his servants to bring the first priest whom he could find, and this, unfortunately, happened to be Sir Ambrose Pollard. He was instantly ushered to the bed-side of the lovely sufferer—lovely still, even when thou, son of darkness and destruction! had caught her in thine icy and life-chilling clutch.

She fixed on him those blue eyes which shone too brightly for a being of clay, and her lips, whose very ghastliness awakened admiration, moved a little, and her small white teeth—so white and so small—grated together, and her clenched fists moved under the bed-clothes; and the black-hearted slave of bloody Rome, as he observed her emotion, endeavoured to frown, but he was too base a coward, and, instead of frowning, he trembled. At this moment the mediciner entered. He was accompanied by a tall, lean man, clad in a close black cassock, and wearing a square black cap, adorned with a long tassel of the same colour.

This latter person pushed up to the bed-side. He took off his cap, and, crossing his arms on his breast, knelt down.

"Pray for me, holy sir!" murmured Lady Alice; and she drew her hands from beneath the clothes, and crossed them over her breast.

"I have been a grievous sinner," she said, in a faint tone; "but

my faith is strong, and I trust I have truly repented. I am unworthy though—unworthy indeed.”

The clergyman stooped down, and whispered in her ear. A faint smile stole over her pale features; her hands relaxed their clasp; and her arms fell powerless by her side. She opened her eyes, which had closed involuntarily, and those lovely orbs were now covered with a filmy veil, which seemed to obscure her vision. Nevertheless, as her eyes fell on Sir Henry Sinclair and his son, whom Master Simon had introduced to her chamber, a shade of deathful blue spread over her face, and she made a movement as though she had recognised them.

“For—give!” she muttered at length.

“May He forgive thee as freely as I do!” exclaimed Sir Henry, as the tears ran down his manly cheeks.

Master Henry, though unable to repress his emotion, stepped forward, and took the sufferer’s hand in his own. Lady Alice was evidently summoning her dying energies to the rescue. Her face was convulsed; her lips rose up fearfully on one side; and as her eyelids fell and rose again, so quick that their motion was scarcely seen, she clenched her fists close, and digging them into the bed, suddenly raised herself up. She looked Master Henry in the face, and, as she faltered forth “For—get!” fell back a corpse.

“She died out of the pale of Holy Church,” cried Sir Ambrose Pollard, exultingly. “She is denied Christian burial.”

“Liar!” said the clergyman who had attended Lady Alice; “I administered to her this morning.”

“And who art thou?” asked Sir Ambrose.

“I am John Wickliff!” said the other, as he placed his cap on his head, and, turning from the priest, quitted the room.

“‘The Lord has taken away our head to-day,’” said the mediciner, quoting the words of the inspired Elijah.

“But there are those left who will care for you, kind Jew,” observed Sir Henry.

“And peril their lives for you!” said Lord Walter, with deep emotion.

“But whither is the lovely one gone?” returned the Jew. “The flower of summer has perished! The fairest of Canaan’s daughters has mourned her last! And am I left—the weary and old, when the mighty are crushed, and the mother of the unhappy is no more?”

“I must quit this scene,” muttered Sir Henry; and he caught his son by the hand, and led him forth to the street.

CHAPTER XII.—THE LOVERS.

HOW MASTER COTTLE PROJECTED A STRATEGY, AND WHAT
THE STRATEGY WAS.

SIR HENRY and his son proceeded at a slow pace towards Leaden-Hall. Neither of them, during their passage, uttered a single word ; but fed with silence the melancholy which the death of Lady Alice inspired. When, however, they entered the hall, and were introduced to the presence of Sir Herbert de Pye, the cordial welcome which they received from the latter, and the nature of the subject to which he called their attention, quickly dispelled their serious humour.

“Your son here,” he said to Sir Henry, “has advertised me that he has chosen a lady-love. He soars high, I think, since none but an earl’s daughter will content him !”

Master Henry blushed ; and his father, perceiving his confusion, looked grave.

“Howbeit, my old friend,” resumed Sir Herbert, “I have adopted him for mine own, you know. I have advised the Earl of Hereford, who is the lady’s father, that Henry will be my heir ; and I think he will scarce raise objections now.”

Master Henry threw himself at Sir Herbert’s feet, and as he raised his hand, and pressed it to his lips, the old chevalier forced him to rise.

“Ay, ay,” he said, “this is how you come over me, you undutiful boy. You kept me in the dark about your lady-love though. Well, to punish you, I will put a stop to the matter.”

“Nay, my good lord ——”

“’Tis too late,” smiled Sir Herbert. “I have already communed with the earl ; and as the Lady Evaline is stubborn, and refuses to discard you, we have settled that you are to wed her to-morrow !”

The speaker laughed, and as Master Henry and his father also seemed to enjoy the joke, the trio laughed very heartily together, which unanimity of sentiment appeared to please the old chevalier exceedingly.

"I have news for you too, my old friend," said the chevalier to Sir Henry. "This graceless boy fought so lustily for the king the other day, when the insurgents met in Smoothfield, that we have hopes of having your attainder rescinded."

"That is good news, indeed," replied Sir Henry, as he shook his son by the hand. "But may not we see the fair lady to whom Henry dedicates his heart and sword?"

"I faith," rejoined the old chevalier, "there cannot chance a better occasion to present you; and so, with your son's permission, we will straight seek her."

Master Henry offered no objection; and accordingly, preceded by Sir Herbert, he and his father repaired to the Lady Evaline's apartments.

That young lady received them with mingled smiles and blushes. The earl, for whom Sir Herbert sent a messenger, soon afterwards entered; and Lady Evaline and Master Henry stole away into a corner.

Meanwhile, as might be expected, Dick remained despondent in the garden. When he knew not that he possessed either a kinsman or a sixpence, as was the case a score of hours previous, he was sufficiently gloomy and wretched; but this disposition, he thought, was then natural, and as he was at the bottom of Fortune's ladder, and in no dread of further tumbles, not utterly hopeless. Now, however, when he was the possessor of wealth, it seemed that, to spite him, and to rob his despair of its tone of reproach, Fortune had conceded him a minor favour in order that she might the more speciously deny him a great one, and, in the bitterness of his disappointment, he upbraided her with her plausibility, and bade her take back that gift which was but a tinselled mockery of his dark despondency. In this mood, from which Hubert endeavoured in vain to rescue him, he retired to his uncle's chamber, where, as the morbid commotion of his thoughts continued to harass him, and did not suffer him to sleep till the morning, he remained till late the next day. When he arose, and descended to the hall, he found that his uncle had been summoned forth by Master Simon, who had been deputed to invite him to Mistress Alice's nuptials; and, though he had predetermined not to be there, he felt chagrined that he, too, had not been sent for. But what was it to him? Nothing—nothing at all! and he fixed his eyes on the ground, as though he were looking for his grave, and tried to discover what he was thinking about; and, strange as it may appear, the tide of double-consciousness ran so strong that he could not conjecture.

Then he started up like a maniac, with his eyes stiff in his head,

and his heart knocking against his side, and then, indeed, he knew what he was thinking about. Surely, though, he could not have a complete idea of his utter misery. He must wake himself up. He must ask himself what the bells were chiming so merrily for. He must recal, with a spell of mighty power, a thousand cherished reminiscences. He must ask himself if Mistress Alice were really to be married that morning—if, as he stood idle there, she was standing at the consecrated altar of God, plighting her faith to another, and, while her heart upbraided her lips, taking an unnatural oath to deny him her love. Was he a brute, or a madman, that he did not cling to this harrowing truth? or was it a dream, or, as Miriam had said, a fantasy? Holy Mary! no! it was life, reality, plain and startling truth!

He felt some one grasp his arm, and, turning round, beheld Hubert, for whose appearance at this crisis the chronicler must now proceed to account.

Master Cottle, when he was apprised of the safe return of the Unicorn, and of the history of her voyage, had proceeded in quest of Master Simon Racket, whom, after a laborious pursuit, he at length found, not, as he expected, in his usual placid humour, but bewailing the recent decease of Lady Alice de Windsor. Master Cottle, however, soon restored him to tolerable equanimity; and after a conference of two hours, during which Dame Eleanor was admitted to their confidence, a scheme was concocted that thereafter occasioned considerable festivity among the parties whom it concerned.

On the following morning, at an early hour, and while Master Cottle repaired to the house of Fitzwarren, Master Simon visited the various bell-ringers of the metropolis, and having bribed them to commence a general peal precisely at eleven o'clock, sought the presence of Hubert Cromwell. He implored that person, as he valued the happiness of his nephew, to hasten to the house of Fitzwarren, where, he said, Master Cottle desired to commune with him on a matter of moment, which could not be communicated to another person. Thither, though he was unwilling to leave Dick to himself, Hubert instantly proceeded; and Master Simon, who accompanied him, introduced him at once to the merchant's sitting-chamber.

The chamber put forth unusual pretensions to magnificence; but its inmates, with the exception of Master Cottle, seemed to mock its pomp. Master Fitzwarren looked grave and abstracted; Mistress Alice was mute and motionless; and Miriam, though her cheek was flushed, appeared to be unutterably wretched. Master Cottle, on the entrance of Hubert and his guide, beckoned Master Fitzwarren apart, and communicated something to him which, though he spoke not a word, made a visible impression on the merchant.

"Shall I break the matter to her?" asked Master Cottle.

"Do so," said Fitzwarren. And Master Simon, who overheard what had passed, rubbed his hands together with exceeding spirit.

"Haw!" said Master Cottle, as he reached the side of Mistress Alice.

"Sir!" exclaimed Mistress Alice, starting to her feet.

Master Cottle seized her hand, and, pressing it fondly, resumed, "Can you bear to hear sudden news? Could you prepare yourself hastily for happiness? Think now, my dear young mistress, if I resigned my claim to your hand, whom you would prefer."

One deep blush spread over Mistress Alice's face and neck. She leaned back on her chair, and a flood of tears, which ran like liquid pearls down her beautiful cheeks, choked her utterance as she replied, "You are too—too good."

"Only," said Master Cottle, with deep emotion, "only that I should have to abdicate the kingship of the bucks—"

"Ay, ay," interrupted Master Simon.

"And only that she loves me not—"

"True for you," ejaculated Master Simon.

"And only that Simon, who is a man of parts, regrets his bachelor days, I could find it in my heart to wed her. But as it is, Queen of London's daughters, I resign thee to my friend Dickon."

Mistress Alice screamed; and Miriam screamed too.

"I will go bring Dick to thank thee, thou generous man!" said Hubert to Master Cottle; and he quitted the room.

"Poor Miriam!" said Mistress Alice apart. "What wilt thou do now?"

"Fear not for me, sweet Alice," replied Miriam. "Be happy, dearest! Love him ever as thou lovest now! I am one of an outcast race—not to be loved, not to be pitied. But I will not sadden thy nuptial morning with my presence. My sire has sent for me to repair to a house of mourning. Thither I will now hasten, and, when time has subdued my love, we will meet again."

She threw her arms round the neck of Mistress Alice, and bade her farewell; and Alice, conscious that the nuptial festivities would be maddening to her, suffered her to depart. Neither Master Fitzwarren nor Simon Racket, when she told them that her father had directed her to repair to him, pressed her to remain; and with a bursting heart and a trembling step she departed.

CHAPTER XIII.—THE SEARCH.

WHAT BECAME OF MIRIAM WHEN SHE LEFT THE HOUSE OF
MASTER FITZWARREN.

POOR MIRIAM!—she walked away at an unusual pace; but though she strode along so hastily, she tottered at every step. And it was no marvel that she did totter. Her brain seemed to be on fire; yet every dark thought that dashed across it, and every scorching reflection that it emitted, shot a cold shudder through her frame. Oh! if she could have squeezed one tear from her heart, which had not a solitary drop in its crystal well, how greedily her hot brain would have drank it up!—or if she could have drawn one deep sigh, and thus unlocked the melodious feelings of her bosom, which, till she could find that magnetic key, was still as marble, what a flood of womanly gentleness would have come to her relief! Then she might find that the world was not dark, that life was not a shadow, that death——

It was a fearful obsession that—to anticipate the Great Disposer, and to rush to the front of His bar, before the awful trump had sounded, with a bloody hand raised in defiance! But was it so very, very sinful? Were the consequences so inconceivably fatal? No, no!—it was the creed of cowards, bigots, and narrow-minded slaves—the offspring of mortal fear and human prejudice—the artifice, ghastly but shallow, of blatant priests. It were hard indeed, and unjust withal, if she might not render up, when it was burthensome, the life that she had never asked—the world that she had renounced. No one, however prejudiced, could gainsay that; and therefore, instead of going to the place she had originally intended, she would repair to her father's house, and think what death were the easiest.

It was a Pagan philosopher, if the chronicler remember right, who said that the workings of a woman's heart constituted the

profoundest of mysteries; and what Christian, of either sex, can contradict him? In the wild paroxysm of despair, which bursts the silver fetters of modesty and love, or in the height of indulged passion, which no opposition can subdue, and which time can scarce decay, what a rapid succession of thoughts, purposes, and schemes arises in her heart!—and who can say, that when she is least a woman, there is not still a sense of her weakness, and a remnant of her native qualities, visible in her conduct? Such, at least, was the case with Miriam, when, as she entered her father's laboratory, and closed and bolted the door behind her, she drew one deep breath of hesitation. The next moment, however, she sprang forward, stubborn and resolved, and opened a small closet in which the mediciner kept his drugs.

She shook out a small quantity of white powder from a vial that stood on the shelf, and threw it into a drinking cup; and then, having infused some water, stirred it round till the particles had dissolved. She bent her head over it, and placed her nose close to the surface, but scent it had none. She turned away, and walked slowly to the door, and, returning to the table on which she had left it, gazed at the cup as though she would absorb its contents with her eyes. Was that a footstep? No! But a heavy foot would tread there soon. The step of a hoary pilgrim, coming from the death-bed of a contrite sinner to the chamber of the hardened suicide, would soon waken an echo within those unhallowed walls—unhallowed by the presence of the suicide's corpse.

Her face was as pale as alabaster; yet, notwithstanding, it was so fraught with expression, blended with such a refined complexion, that it seemed to be made of thought. Her long black hair, owing to the inward excitement under which she laboured, had lost its curl, and fell in rich, glossy waves over her shoulders and bosom. Her bust was as still and as white as the purest marble. One would have thought, as she stood gazing on the draught of death, that she was the masterpiece of some magic sculptor—endued with the witchery of expression, but wanting the reality of life. Her figure was so chaste—her drapery was so quiet, so picturesque—her limbs were so exquisitely chiselled—that a spectator, if one there had been, would never have thought that she was a human being, meditating so dark a crime. She seized the fatal cup, and, as she lifted it to her lips, raised her eyes towards heaven.

Heaven!—what had *she* to do with heaven? Had she ever a bright hope, which would last through eternity, recorded in the Book of Doom? Let her wave her hand, red with her own dear blood, in the face of her Maker, whose image she had defaced in her own person, and then, when angels could not abide its glory, cast her eyes towards His throne!—She dashed the cup and its contents on the floor.

As she knelt humbly down before Omnipotence, as she buried

her face in her hands, and, being once again a woman, wept, she did not utter a single word of prayer; but she disclosed her broken heart, poor thing!—and that was the more grateful sacrifice. After she had been kneeling thus, however, for some time, and had thought over and over again that she was unworthy of, not that she would be denied, mercy, something strengthened her spirit, and, as the tears of sincere repentance flowed forth from her eyes, she ventured to confess her guilt, and to implore forgiveness.

She rose with a calm and grateful, though broken heart; and it was not a wilful fault, if fault it were, that she still loved Dick. She tried to banish him from her thoughts; and if tears could have washed him from her memory, or sighs drawn his image forth from her heart, she would have succeeded; but, as it was not so ordered,

“ She pined in thought,
And with a green and yellow melancholy”

looked forward to the grave.

At length, however, she shook off her apathy, and proceeded to the house of Lord Walter de Windsor, whither, as has been stated, her father had desired her to repair. Leaving her to pursue her way thither, where events had happened that she had not anticipated, the chronicler must precede her to her father's presence.

On the day after Sir Ambrose Pollard had visited Lord de Windsor's house, where, as has been shewn, he had encountered the mediciner, he went to the governor of the gaol of Newgate, and, having impressed him with the importance of achieving his capture, informed him of the mediciner's place of refuge. The governor, anxious to recover his lost prisoner, instantly armed four of his assistants; and thus seconded, and guided by Sir Ambrose, he sallied forth.

They soon arrived at their destination; and having decided on the course which they would pursue, and determined, if persuasion failed, to carry off the mediciner by force, they inflicted an authoritative rap on Lord de Windsor's door. A domestic, who reconnoitred them from an upper casement, instantly acquainted his master with their suspicious appearance; and that personage repaired to the casement, and, having first surveyed them, pushed it open.

“ What seek you ?” he cried, as he protruded his head from the open casement.

“ We have the king's authority to arrest the Jew mediciner,” replied Sir Ambrose. “ He is now in your house.”

“ How know you that, Sir Priest ?” demanded Lord Walter.

“ I saw him there myself, proud peer,” returned Sir Ambrose.

“ But you know not if he be here now,” replied Lord Walter. “ Howbeit, ye shall not say I refused admittance to the king's officers. I will admit ye straightway.”

Nearly a quarter of an hour elapsed, however, before the priest and his posse were admitted. Just as Sir Ambrose inflicted a second and furious rap thereon, the door opened, and Lord Walter presented himself.

"Enter!" he said, preceding Sir Ambrose and the constables into the hall. "You see," he said, as they entered the latter apartment, which was lined with armed men—"You see, Sir Priest, I am prepared to resist aggression."

Sir Ambrose glared savagely at the nobleman. "My Lord," said the gaoler, "you will scarce venture to molest the king's officers?"

"Not while they act on warrant," said Sir Alfred. "Search for your prisoner, and if you find him, which you will not, take him away."

"He is not in the house, then, my lord?" returned the gaoler, pausing abruptly.

"Search, sir! search!" cried Sir Ambrose, furiously. "This man will not tell a downright lie, because, forsooth, he durst not. But he would blind us with subterfuge, put us off with evasion, and wrap lies in a cloak of truth. Search! search! Leave not a corner or a key-hole which this sorcerer could creep into without close scrutiny."

Urged on by this objurgatory address, which the fierce priest rendered more emphatic by his frantic gestures, the gaolers expressed their readiness to comply with his wishes; and Sir Ambrose, having posted one of them as a sentry at the door, preceded them to the upper apartments. Lord Walter, after whispering to his esquire, who remained in the hall, to be in readiness, followed the inquisitors, and suffered them to institute the strictest scrutiny in every apartment. When, however, they came to the bed-chamber of the deceased Lady Alice, whose corpse lay therein, he thrust himself betwixt them and the door, and drawing his rapier, threatened to slay the first man who attempted to enter.

"The Jew is in there!" cried Sir Ambrose, with diabolical exultation. "I command you, in the name of the holy father, God's vicar on earth, to open the door. Refuse, and let the heaviest ban of heaven light on you!"

Lord Walter turned pale, and, after a moment's hesitation, stepped aside. "You would break in on the privacy of the dead," he said. "Be this on your own hands!"

Sir Ambrose pushed open the door; and seizing the jerkin of the gaoler, who had shrunk back, drew him into the chamber.

The curtains of the casements, of which there were three, had been drawn down, and the beams of the meridian sun, as they struggled through the web of the drapery, blended the shadow of death with their light. On the costly bed, with the snow-white coverlet drawn up to her beautiful chin, lay the corpse of Lady Alice.

Death! thou hadst withdrawn the lustre from those blue eyes,

which had reduced heroes and poets to bondage, and thou hadst closed their sweet lids, and combed down their long lashes;—henceforward they would illuminate the banquet of the creeping thing, who would devour their loveliness, and, drunken with the mellifluous food, make a couch of her beauteous bosom, where, but three short days before, love and ecstasy had pillowed:—This hadst thou done, Dark Destroyer! and Heaven's fairest work acknowledged thy power. But not death—not even the ghastly finery of the tomb, shocking as it is to the eye, and appalling to the heart, could detract from the beauty which God had created, and which time, love's enemy, had spared. Those sweet white hands that were crossed over her breast, whose elegant outline was marked on the close coverlet, afforded presumptive evidence of her personal perfection—of ethereal proportions and exquisite combination—of that fulness and roundness of limb which painters call *contour*. Some barbarous hand had curtailed her brown hair, and one, more compassionate and more tasteful, had wound it into a topknot, crowned with a comb of pearls. Her face, of course, was exceedingly pale, but the classic rounding of its features, though they themselves were vacant, was so perfect, and their regularity was so striking, that the melancholy which they excited in a spectator was pleasing rather than morbid. Such, at least, was the sum of Lord Walter's reflection, as he stood by the side of the bed, and, while the priest and the gaoler were engaged in searching the room, gazed in the face of the corpse.

"My Lord!" said a voice, in a tone of deep sympathy.

Lord Walter turned round to the speaker.

"My Lord!" continued his squire, who was the person that had addressed him, "a servant has just brought this packet from Sir Herbert de Pye. He was charged to deliver it instantly."

Lord Walter glanced at the indorsation:—

"Waste, haste! post=haste! post=haste!"

Ride, villain, ride! for thy life! for thy life! for thy life!"

which was invariably written on the exterior of ancient dispatches.

"'Tis of moment," said Lord Walter, as he tore open the packet. "Oh!" he added, as he glanced at the inclosure, "is it even so?"

He stepped into the further corner of the room, which the inquisitors were now examining, and drew back a panel in the wainscot, opening into a secret recess.

"Sir Mediciner," he cried, "come forth. Here have we the king's officers come in quest of you."

The mediciner walked out with a firm step; and Sir Ambrose, who had shrunk back on the disclosure of the secret passage, instantly pounced upon him, and grasped the collar of his gown with both his hands.

"There is the mediciner!" cried Lord Walter, "and here is his pardon, signed and sealed with the king's own hand!" He handed



William Road

The Mediciner's Pardon.

the document to the gaoler, and, pointing to Sir Ambrose, continued, "And here is a fellow who, though clad in the garb of God's ministers, has rudely invaded a house of mourning, and a chamber of death. Wherefore, as a Christian soldier, and a knight of chivalry, I will requite him as he deserves."

"Arch heretic!" cried Sir Ambrose, menacingly, "I defy thee! I am, as thou hast said, God's minister, and invulnerable to such as thou. I revel not in halls, or play the gallant in bowers; but when night hath sealed the sluggard's eyes, and stretched the base peasant on his truckle, I pray long prayers, and lash and pinch my flesh—I am holy, thou publican! and I can shut such as thou out of heaven!"

"Cease thy blasphemy!" exclaimed the mediciner, indignantly. "Dost thou think, thou worm, that Beneficence is pleased to see His creatures, for whom he hath raised the fair fabric of the world, making themselves miserable? or thinkest thou, with still less of sanity, that they who make a hell of the beauteous earth, or, as thou wouldst have it, mortify the flesh, deserve heaven therefor?—Curse on thy arrogance! and doubly-cursed be——"

The mediciner paused abruptly.

"Say on!" said Sir Ambrose.

"I will!" said the mediciner, with unusual vehemence—"I will; and take the fatal consequence."

"Thou hast a child, I think?" observed Lord Walter.

"True, my lord," returned the mediciner, in a less passionate tone. "Thou hast reminded me that I have one to live for. The God of Israel bless thee and thy house!"

"And now," said Sir Ambrose Pollard, "I seize the body of this heretic—Alice de Windsor. She died without the pale of Holy Church, and tasted not, as I can prove, the blessed Eucharist. I charge all present, as they dread the ban and prosecution of the church, to aid me to remove the cursed corse."

"Now by my hopes of heaven!" said Lord Walter, choking with passion, "I guessed thy purpose; but mark me, thou bad man! mark all of ye! the first who ventures on this undertaking, whether priest or layman, dies in the attempt! See!"—and he stamped thrice on the floor,—“I am not alone!”

As Lord Walter spoke, and pointed with his naked rapier to the door, the armed partisans who been stationed in the hall, and whom the three stamps on the floor, as was previously arranged, summoned thence, burst into the chamber.

"He would seize the body of your dear mistress, my hearts!" cried Lord Walter. "He calls her heretic! infidel! contemner of the Eucharist! What say ye?"

"He lies!"

"Doth he indeed?" said Lord Walter. "I'faith, he trembles too. Take him, then, to the hall; and, for your ladies' sakes, shew him no pity."

“ Hold, ye fiends !” cried the priest. “ Know ye not——”

But Lord Walter was not disposed to listen to the priest's oration, or to suffer it to be delivered to his followers ; and therefore, while he was yet speaking, he seized him by the collar of his cassock, and, applying his foot to the posterior development of his person, kicked him forward. The gaoler and his assistants, being fearful of a similar visitation, and having now no further business there, incontinently made for the door, and, as Lord Walter did not interrupt them, were suffered to pass. Not so Sir Ambrose, however. That reverend ecclesiastic, whose sanctity ought to have raised an impregnable bulwark round his person, descended the stairs in a fashion so novel, that though he was propelled by no gentle influence, it could not but be pleasing, particularly, though not one of them was heard to laugh, to his conductors. At length, however, he was kicked into the street ; and turning round on the partisans, who attended him no further than the door, he vowed vengeance on all of them.

At this moment Miriam arrived ; and hastening to the presence of her father, in the chamber of the deceased Lady Alice, threw herself into his arms.

“ We will now place her in the coffin,” said Lord Walter ; and, beckoning Miriam into a chair, he drew the mediciner from the room.

Four of the female domestics now entered, pale and weeping ; and placed the body of Lady Alice in a black coffin, which stood on trestles in the middle of the chamber. A piece of black broadcloth had been spread over the trestles, and two tall wax tapers, which shed a sickly light around, were placed on either side of the coffin. Miriam was then left to keep a lone vigil over the dead.

There is nothing so elevates the soul as the contemplation of a corpse—especially if it endure through solitary hours, and those hours far in the night. We are apt to remember that we will one day be the same—that they who dress us for the sepulchre will talk over us, and make remarks that, were we spiritually present, they would not utter. A melancholy morality blends itself with our thoughts ; and we speculate whither the spirit of that body has gone, and whether, while we are watching there, it may not be hovering near. And then fear steals over us—at least, it did over Miriam ; and, thinking to dismiss it, she took up a dulcimer, and accompanied its soft notes with this

Elegy.

“ ‘ Ashes to ashes !’—Cease to weep,
For death is but a dreamless sleep,
That hath an end ;
And soon the trumpet's music deep
Its bonds shall rend !

The iron voice of yon sad bell,
 That doth pronounce the funeral knell,
 Is like to man :—
 Its life is o'er ere it can tell
 That it began !

The virgin rose that opes its eyes,
 And dons a rich and royal guise,
 At peep of morn,
 Ere night will lay a sacrifice—
 Trode down and lorn !

The lark that hails the dawn of day,
 And speaks, in sweet and jocund lay,
 Of days as bright,
 The woodman's arrow fleet will slay
 Before the night !

And man is like the lark and flow'r,
 He hath as gay and brief an hour ;
 And woman, too ;—
 And then death lifts his shaft of pow'r,
 And strikes them through !

'Ashes to ashes !'—Cease to weep !
 Fling 'dust to dust' in the grave so deep !
 Our farewell's ta'en ;
 And sleeper scarcely from that sleep
 May wake again !"

She ceased ; for at this moment the door of the chamber was softly opened, and the mediciner and Lord Walter entered. The latter had determined, as he had no doubt that the priesthood would interfere, and endeavour to have her refused Christian burial, to have his late wife buried that night ; and he had ordered his arrangements in such a manner that no unfriendly eye could track her sepulchre. Having taken a last look at that pale face, which still blended beauty with its ghastliness, he and the mediciner screwed down the lid of the coffin ; and having drawn the pall over it, and being assisted by his esquire and henchman, carried it down to the street-door. Before the door stood a *whirlicote*, "for of old time," says Strype, "coaches were not known in this island, but chariots, or whirlicotes, then so called ; and they only used of princes, or men of great estates, such as had their footmen about them."

It was now near eleven o'clock, and as they drew the dark pall over the coffin, which they placed within the whirlicote, and then sat on either side thereof, it was scarce possible that it would be detected. It was a lovely night though, and, as they drove slowly on towards the burial-ground, the full moon illuminated even the tears on their faces.

They proceeded to the gate "toward the north, called Bishops-gate, so that (as may be supposed) the same was first builded by some bishop of London." They passed, unquestioned, through the gate, and entered "a large field, of old time called Lolesworth, now Spittlefield." The moon shone fair on the church of St. Mary Spittal, whither, driving slowly over a deeply-rutted road, they now proceeded. At length they reached the church-yard, where a person in a black cassock, who, previous to their arrival, had been leaning against the low wall, advanced to meet them.

"Holy Sir John," said Lord Walter, "I owe thee many thanks for this attention."

"None, my good lord, none at all," replied Doctor Wickliff, for he it was. "We have yet to raise the tomb-stone."

"My trusty fellows are close at hand, Sir John, and I have implements within the whirlicote."

The esquire and henchman arrived at this moment; they incontinently sprang over the church-yard wall, and, while Lord Walter and the mediciner watched the corpse, followed Doctor Wickliff to the middle of the church-yard. A large, square stone, laid flat on a low base of bricks, covered the vault before which they stopped, and their guide directed them to raise it. They soon loosened the cement, and after gaining a purchase for their crow-bars, which they had brought with them from the whirlicote, raised the stone, and with the assistance of Doctor Wickliff, who seconded them with another bar, toppled it on one side. They then returned to the carriage, and aided by Lord Walter and the mediciner, and preceded by the clergyman, bore Lady Alice de Windsor to her last dark home.

Never, surely, did the moon look so celestial as when it shed its calm, sweet lustre on that sable pall and that yawning grave!—and, good St. George! it seemed a fit illumination of the melancholy scene. It could not but be a lovely night and a quiet hour when Beauty's sweetest daughter was interred—when the Queen of Love was given to darkness; nor could inanimate loveliness have a nobler elegy, as she passed the bourne of time, than that lofty psalm which Wickliff read. But, *Requiescat in pace!*—let us close her tomb!

CHAPTER XIV.—THE WEDDING.

THE HISTORIAN SHEWS THAT HE HAS NOT FORGOTTEN HIS HERO.

DICK WHITTINGTON, on learning from Hubert what had transpired at the house of Master Fitzwarren, instantly accompanied his informer to that locality. On his arrival thither, in consequence of the precaution of Hubert, he had not to endure the pain and suspense of an explanation ; and consequently he rushed into the chamber, and without regarding any other of the inmates, clasped Mistress Alice in his arms.

It were tedious to describe the scene that ensued—the frication of Master Simon's hands, and his repeated encomiums on perseverance ; the ahaws of Master Cottle, and his several plaudits of Master Simon's wit ; the sober joy of Master Fitzwarren ; the congratulations of Hubert Cromwell ; the blushes of Mistress Alice ; and the ineffable happiness of Dick. Suffice it, that on the entrance of Dame Eleanor Racket, with two young ladies dressed as bride's-maids, Master Cottle proposed that they should repair to the church of St. Michael, Cornhill ; and, as no one offered any objection, they proceeded thither incontinently. Just as they reached the altar, where a clergyman waited to receive them, a company of cavaliers and ladies, attired in bridal array, introduced themselves into the church, and, amidst a murmur of welcome from Masters Racket, Cottle, and Cromwell, advanced to the altar. Dick and Mistress Alice—displeased, perhaps, at the interruption, turned to scrutinize the new-comers, and, to their great surprise, beheld Master Henry Sinclair and his fair mistress, attended, on either side, by a company of tall cavaliers and fair dames. There was Sir Henry Sinclair—no longer plain Master Cobbs, but a girded knight, bearing in his hand a plumed and braided beaver : there was the old chevalier of Taunton—Sir Herbert de Pye ; there was the stout old Earl of Hereford ; and last, who was really first, there was the fair young dame, the Lady Evaline Bohein—the flower of that courtly company.

When the priest had tied the nuptial knot—the holiest of

Heaven's holiest ordinances, what emotions swelled in the bursting bosoms of those four young persons ! How Dick's heart beat ! and how that of Mistress Alice fluttered ! How the spirit of each bowed down before the Almighty King, and, confessing its own impotence and infirmity, acknowledged His loving-kindness and consideration ! It were false to say, at such a moment and in such a place, that the creed which immured lovely girls in dark dungeons—which hid the Creator's handiwork in a pit, and locked nature's sweetest quality in a cage—it were a direct lie, and an atrocious libel on Heaven, to say that that creed was not a vile and monstrous idolatry ; else why, as the priest pronounced the nuptial benediction, and told them that they were thenceforward **ONE**, why did Dick and Mistress Alice become alive to a new sense ? why did the dearest feelings of humanity arise in their hearts, and the brightest sympathies of nature kindle in their bosoms ? Mistress Alice felt that, through the union of love and sympathy, her mind had been born again—that it was endued with new passions, and open to new impulses—the loyal, devoted, and eternal passion of a wife, and the bright, active, and amiable impulses of a mother ; and Dick felt that his heart was no longer single—that it was purified from the selfishness of an individual existence—that it had a stay and a councillor and a bride in the breast of another. Such were the sentiments of the united lovers as they returned home—dreaming, as they walked, of a thousand ecstatic delights, and a whole futurity of sunshine. Oh ! where was the dark-eyed Miriam *then* ?

The day was spent, as such days should be, in feasting and revelry ; and the two officiating bride's-maids, both of whom were young and fair, made up their minds to get married as soon as they conveniently could—a resolution which is earnestly recommended to the consideration of every lady who, like the bride's-maids in question, is young and fair.

The mediciner, through the influence of Sir Herbert de Pye, who convinced the King of his steadfast loyalty, was taken under the royal protection, and, previous to the usurpation of Henry the Fourth, ended his days in peace. Miriam, after lingering for a few years, fell into a rapid consumption, which baffled the utmost skill of her father, and in a short time hurried her to the grave.

Sir Henry Sinclair was reinstated in his honours and estates. He lived to a good old age, and died, in the arms of his son, at Taunton Castle, which feof, on the demise of Sir Herbert de Pye, was inherited by Master Henry. This latter cavalier attained high dignities. In the list of nobles summoned to Parliament, bearing date in January, 1399, he is named by the style and title of " the

ryght trustie and honourabil Chevalier, Henry Sancte Clare, Baron of Taunton, and Signore of Sedgemoor." Some of his descendants, perhaps, can still be found among our patrician families—but this is a matter of speculation.

Master Cottle never married. He lived to be an aged and venerable bachelor; and, at his death, bequeathed his wealth to one Simon Cottle Racket, who is mentioned in the will as being the testator's godson, and a "bachelor of parts."

Master Simon Racket was induced to discontinue his practice of putting his house in order—an arrangement which he thenceforward intrusted to Dame Eleanor, who, by the excellence of her economy, soon convinced him of the policy of this step. When, two or three years after his daughter's marriage, Master Fitzwarren retired from business, Simon Racket was admitted into the firm as junior partner; and in a few years thence became a wealthy citizen. It is said, that on the day of his installation as Sheriff of London, in the year 1399, he declared that, "as worthy Master Cottle often said, 'perseverance accomplisheth many things.'"

CHAPTER XV.—THE LAST.

WHICH CONCLUDES THIS HISTORY.

RICHARD WHITTINGTON (for it is now time to give him his name in full) was not suffered to remain in the obscure situation which, notwithstanding his wealth and influence, his unassuming disposition led him to prefer. In the year 1399, when he was thirty-five years of age, he was elected Lord Mayor of London; and, as a further proof of the esteem in which they held him, chosen by his fellow-citizens to represent them in parliament. Some years after the usurpation of the regicide Henry the Fourth, when the kingdom was threatened with invasion by France and Scotland, Richard Whittington was one of those merchants who surrendered a tenth of their property to the state; and for his patriotic conduct on this occasion, which found the usurper deserted by the nobles of the land, he was created a knight. Some time afterwards he was sent, in company with the Archbishop of York, as a commissioner to the Earl of Northumberland, then in arms against the government, to endeavour to conciliate him; and, though he failed in that object, Henry was so pleased with the Archbishop's report of his integrity and prudence, that, as some say, he offered to raise him to the peerage. Sir Richard, however, declined the honour, though, in the following year (1406), he suffered himself to be a second time elected Lord Mayor of London. During this mayoralty, which some erroneously call his third, the Earl of Northumberland made such head that Henry was obliged to take the field; and Sir Richard Whittington subscribed one thousand pounds (a great sum in those days) towards equipping his troops.

In the year 1410, or thereabout, Sir Richard applied for a licence to build a church, together with a college and alms-house, on a piece of ground which the city had given him for that purpose. In the following year, having obtained the requisite licence, he built and endowed the church and college, which he

called the church and college of St. Spirit and St. Mary. The foundation of the college was for a master, five fellows, masters of arts, clerks, and conducts; and an alms-house, which he afterwards built, was attached. This latter building was called God's-house, or hospital, and was endowed for thirteen poor men—citizens. The principal, who was to be a teacher of the others, was to have eighteen-pence the week; and each of the remaining twelve was to receive two-pence per diem. The house was to be supplied with fuel from the foundation—with a hutch, or corn-chest, of three decks; a common seal, and furniture. The inmates were bound to pray “for the good estate of Richard Whittington, and Alice his wife, their founders; for the souls of Hugh Fitz-warren, and Dame Maud his wife; of King Richard the Second, and Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, special lords and promoters of the said Whittington; and for Anne and Eleanor, the wives of the said king and duke. Moreover, for the good weel and estate of our sovereign lord King Henry the Fourth and the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury (Thomas Chicheley) that now be, and for the conservators and benefactors of the same house, while they live; also for their souls and ours, when they and we be passed out of the world; and generally for them to whom the said Sir Richard Whittington and Dame Alice were beholden in any wise, while they live, and for all Christen soules.”

The will of Whittington, which, the chronicler is informed, is still in the possession of the Mercers' Company, is headed by a curious illumination, representing, says Tennant, “Whittington lying on his death-bed—a very lean, consumed, meagre body; and his three executors, with a priest and divers others, standing by his bedside.” The document opens, “To all true people of Cryste that shall se or here the things conteyned in these present letters, John Coventre, Jenkin Carpenter, and William Grove, exekiters of the testament of the worthie and notabil merchaunt Richard Whittington, late citizen and mercer of the citie of London, and sometime mayre of the said citie, sendinge greetynge in our Lord God everlastynge.” It concludes thus: “In wytnes we have put to our seels, gyven at London, the xxj daie of Decembre, in the yere of our Lord God MCCCCXXIV:

Go littel boke, go littel tragedie,
Thee lowly submytting to al correction
Of them being maisters now of the mercerie—
Olney, Felding, Boleyn, and Burton;—
Hertilie theym beseetchyng, with humbil salutation,
Thee to accept; and thus to take in glee
For ever to be a servant within our commonaltie.”

Sir Richard also erected and furnished a magnificent library, at Grey Friars, and a foundation in Christ's Hospital. He pulled down and rebuilt Newgate, which was destroyed afterwards by the great fire of London; and beautified the old Guildhall.

In the year 1419, prior to which he had retired from business, Sir Richard was again, for the THIRD time, elected Lord Mayor of London. It was during this mayoralty that he entertained Henry of Agincourt and his bride—Catherine of France.

Never before, perhaps, did a merchant display such magnificence as was then exhibited in the Guildhall. The tables groaned beneath the weight of gold and silver that was heaped upon them ; precious stones were ranged about to reflect the rays of the chandeliers ; and the fires, which the season of the year rendered necessary, were fed with the richest spices. The choicest fish, the most exquisite birds, the most delicate meats, and the most rare confections, served on the precious metals, were spread before the guests, whose senses were all alike regaled. The most skilful musicians, with a quire of beautiful females, performed a concert the while ; and a conduit ran rich wine to their music. “ Surely,” cried the amazed king, “ never had prince such a subject ; never was liberality such as this displayed by a subject to his sovereign.” “ Even the fires,” cried the queen, “ are filled with perfume !”

“ If your highness,” said Sir Richard, “ inhibit me not, I will make those fires still more grateful.” As he ceased speaking, and the king nodded acquiescence, he drew forth a packet of bonds, and advancing to the fire, resumed : “ Thus do I acquit your highness of a debt of sixty thousand pounds,” and he tossed the bonds into the fire.

The king stood mute with astonishment ; the queen was motionless ; and the dames and nobles of the court, unable to repress their admiration, burst into a loud plaudit.

Reader ! this was the last public act of Sir Richard Whittington.

THE END.

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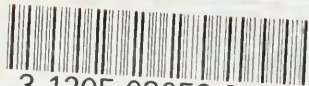
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